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FAMILIAR INSTRUCTIONS
ON THE
HOLINESS AND DIGNITY
OF THE
SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.

ADDRESSED TO PARENTS AND CHRISTIAN YOUTH.

BY REV. M. VUARIN,
PARISH PRIEST OF GENEVA.

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**TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.**  
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PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY
H. & C. McGRATH,
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The work styled "Familiar Instructions on the Sacrament of Matrimony," is edifying and instructive.

† FRANCIS PATRICK,
Bp., Phila.

October 1, 1850.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1850,

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in the Clerk's Office of the District Court, for the Eastern District
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APPROBATION.

THE holiness of Christian Marriage is too little known by the greater part of those who contract this religious engagement; the duties it imposes both as spouses and as parents are still less generally appreciated. Hence, the disturbance of domestic peace, the bad education of children, and the violation or neglect of obligations consecrated by the grace of the sacrament. We cannot, then, but applaud the intention of the pious author of this book, who traces for the married, the instructive and faithful sketch of their duties, and who does this in a manner so well entitled to praise. We willingly give him the testimony of our approval.

† J. P. GASTON,

Archbishop of Amasia, and Apostolic Administrator of Lyons and Vienna.

Lyons, 8th Dec. 1837.

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PREFACE.

THIRTY years experience of the Pastoral Ministry have left on my mind the melancholy conviction, that the profanation of the Sacrament of Matrimony is one of the principal causes of the decay of faith, of the relaxation of morals, and of the extinction of piety in families. It has seemed to me, therefore, a laudable undertaking, to urge the principles and maxims of the doctrine of the Church, on the dignity and holiness of the conjugal state.

I have given these instructions a catechetical form, for the purpose of accommodating them to the capacity of the faithful of every condition and age. May God speak to the heart of all who will read it, and enable it to bear some fruit of salvation, by contributing to establish the reign of virtue in the family circle.

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CHAPTER I.

ON THE DIGNITY OF MARRIAGE.

Q. What is marriage ?

A. A lawful and indissoluble alliance, formed by mutual consent between a man and a woman, for the multiplication of the human race, and of the worshippers of the true God ; which alliance has been raised by Jesus Christ to the dignity of a Sacrament.

Q. Why do you say "a lawful alliance ?"

A. Because every Christian, as a member of society and child of the Church, should, in contracting marriage, conform to the laws of the Church and of the State.

Q. Who instituted marriage ?

A. God himself, in the beginning of the world, when He gave Eve as a companion to Adam, the father of the human race.

Q. What do we learn from the Holy Scripture on the primitive institution of marriage ?

A. The Scripture represents it as an effect of the love and goodness of God to man. And the Lord God said: "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself. Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman; and brought her to Adam."*

Q. What did Adam say when he saw the woman whom God vouchsafed to bring to him?

A. He exclaimed, by divine inspiration; "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh."†

Q. Why did God form the woman of the substance of the first man, instead of creating Eve in the same manner as He had created Adam?

A. For three principal motives:

1. To show the intimate union that should subsist between husband and wife.

* Gen. ii. 18—21, 22.

† Ib. 23, 24.

2. To teach women the submission and dependence they should exhibit to their husbands.

3. To admonish husbands that they should love their wives as portions of themselves.

Q. What lessons should persons in the marriage state learn from this paternal conduct of the Creator ?

A. It should inspire them with religious respect for a state, which God himself has instituted ; as also with a tender sentiment of gratitude towards the Creator, who condescended to preside as Pontiff, at the conjugal union of the first parents of the human race.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE.

Q. Why is marriage more honorable and more holy under the Christian law, than it was under the Patriarchal and Mosaic law ?

A. For two principal reasons :

1. Because our Saviour Jesus Christ, as Divine Legislator, has restored to marriage the character of unity, purity and indissolubility which the Creator had impressed on it, in its primitive institution. This sublime character had been obscured among the Jews by the law of divorce, and almost entirely effaced among the Gentiles by monstrous disorders.

2. Because Jesus Christ, in quality of Redeemer, has elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament.

Q. Is it of faith that marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the New Law ?

A. Yes ; it is a truth we cannot call in ques-

tion without incurring the anathema pronounced by the Church in the Holy Council of Trent. "If any one say that marriage is not really and truly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by our Saviour Jesus Christ, but that it has been invented by men, and that it does not confer grace, let him be anathema."* This decree of the Council of Trent does nothing more than confirm the doctrine proclaimed in the Council of Verona, in the Third Council of Latran, as also in those of Constance and Florence.

Q. Has marriage been always regarded in the Church as an engagement consecrated by religion?

A. Yes; on this subject we have the most incontestable evidence in the writings of the Fathers of the six first ages, whose doctrine should be received by every reasonable Christian, as the expression of primitive belief.

Q. Cite some of these testimonies, in order to confirm in us the sentiments of respect we ought to entertain for so holy an institution?

A. I shall do so but briefly, because I do not wish to make a theological discussion on this

* Sess. xxiv. c. 1.

subject. I desire only to convince you that marriage has been considered by the doctors of the Church as an act which the sacred prayers and ceremonies of the public liturgy have ever raised above the level of the ordinary actions of life and the civil order. TERTULLIAN, who lived in the second century, and who is an unexceptionable witness of the practice of the Church of Africa, says, in a writing addressed to his wife, "How can we express the happiness of the marriage union, contracted under the auspices of the Church, consecrated by the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice, and sealed by the benediction which the angels have witnessed; and which the Eternal Father has ratified?"*

ST. CYRIL, Patriarch of Alexandria, in the beginning of the fifth century, thus speaks of marriage: "Jesus Christ himself assisted at the wedding to which he was invited, in order to sanctify the conjugal union; for it was fitting that He who was to regenerate the nature of man, should not only impart his benediction to those already born, but should prepare graces for those who were afterwards to be born, and consecrate the source of their origin."†

* L. ii.

† Comment. in Joan. ch. xxii.

Towards the end of the fourth century, the following canon was enacted by the Fourth Council of Carthage, at which St. Augustin assisted: "The bridegroom and the bride ought to be presented by their parents or their sponsors, when the priest prepares to give them the nuptial benediction."*

ST. AMBROSE, Archbishop of Milan, says: "Since marriage ought to be sanctified by the benediction of the priest, and by the veil he extends over the married pair, can that alliance be regarded as a real union in which the wedded are not united by the same faith?"†

ST. AUGUSTIN: "In the marriages of Christians the sanctity of the marriage is more to be esteemed than the fruitfulness which is its consequence."‡—"Among all nations the advantage of the nuptial bond is to propagate the human race, and to unite the married pair by the fidelity they owe to each other. But with the people of God, a more precious good, and a stricter bond of union result from the sanctity of the sacrament. A wife, even when divorced

* Comment. in Joan. ch. xvii.

† Lit. ad Vigilium.

‡ De vinculo matrim. ch. xviii.

from her husband, cannot, without sacrilege, contract another engagement during his life.”*

This language of the Fathers of the Church, on the sanctity of the marriage state, is very different from that of Calvin, who says: “The state of marriage is no otherwise good and holy than that of the agriculturist, the mason, the shoemaker and barber, which states are not sacraments.”†

Q. Why does St. Paul call it “a great sacrament,” and then immediately subjoin, “but I speak in Christ and in the Church?”

A. The Apostle himself assigns the dignity of the conjugal union, by saying that marriage represents the intimate union which The Word made Flesh has contracted with human nature, by his incarnation, and with the Church which, in quality of spouse, he has redeemed with his blood.‡

* De vinculo matrim. ch. xxiv.

† “Et agricultura, architectura, sutrina, tonstrina, ordinationes sunt Dei legitimæ, nec tamen sacramenta sunt.” Calvin. Institut. Christ. Relig. lib. iv. ch. xix. 84.

‡ This language of the Doctor of nations is repeated by the Council of Trent, Sess. 24 De matrimonio,—by the Council of Florence, (Decretum pro Armenis),—by St. Isidore of Seville, (Lib. 2, De officiis ecclesiasticus),—by St.

Q. What resemblance is there between the union of persons in the marriage state, and the union of Jesus Christ with the Church, his spiritual spouse ?

A. There are five special points of resemblance, which should be for Christians in this state a source of important and salutary instruction.

Q. Please enumerate them ?

A. 1. In the unity of the spouses is perceived a figure of the unity of the Church, which Jesus Christ has purchased with his blood. The Christian husband can have only one wife, as Jesus Christ has but one Church.

2. In the assurance which Christ has given to his Church, that he would be with her even to the consummation of ages, is seen the indissolubility of the bond which unites the married pair, and which no human consideration can break.

3. The union of Christ with his Church offers to Christians in the married state the model of the mutual fidelity, assistance and

Augustin, (*De Vinculo Mat. and De nupt. et concupisc.*),—and by St. Fulgentius of Ruspa, in Africa, in a letter (*De Viduitate*).

encouragement in the tribulations of life, which should characterize them.

4. In the destinies of the Church associated to the sufferings and humiliations of the Man-God, I find the image of the inexhaustible charity which Christians in this state ought continually to exhibit to each other for their mutual support.

5. In the conjugal union, as in the union of Jesus Christ with his Church, sentiments of faith should regulate the affections, since St. Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ has loved his Church."* The law of the spirit should constantly direct and govern the law of the flesh in the conjugal state.

Q. What grace does the sacrament of matrimony impart to the married couple ?

A. In those who receive it in the state of mortal sin, it produces no grace ; but in those who approach to it in the state of grace, it augments sanctifying grace, and imparts to them grace to live in a Christian manner, in peace and union, to love each other, to support each other, to aid each other, to preserve conjugal

* Eph. v. 25.

chastity, and to educate their children in the fear of God.

Q. What should a Christian do in order to receive the graces which God has mercifully vouchsafed to attach to the sacrament of matrimony ?

A. He ought, 1, To contract marriage conformably to the laws of the Catholic Church, which Jesus Christ has given to the faithful as mother and mistress in the spiritual order.

2. He ought to receive the sacrament with a pure conscience and with intentions worthy of the religion which he has the happiness of professing.

CHAPTER III.

ON CELIBACY AND VIRGINITY.

Q. Though the state of marriage is honorable and holy in the views of the Creator, as well as under the institutions of the Redeemer, are not celibacy and virginity still more excellent and perfect ?

A. Yes ; it is of faith that the states of Christian celibacy and holy virginity are preferable to that of marriage. "If any one," says the Council of Trent,* "dare affirm that the conjugal state is preferable to that of virginity and celibacy, and that it is not better and more happy to remain in virginity or in celibacy, than to contract marriage, let him be anathema."

Q. Why is virginity more perfect than marriage ?

A. Because in the state of virginity the heart

* Sess. xxiv. c. 10.

of man is not divided between the Creator and the creature. "He that is without a wife," says St. Paul, "is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy both in body and spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband."*

Q. Why is virginity a happier state than that of marriage?

A. Because in the state of virginity the faithful soul experiences fully the force of these words of the sacred Scripture: "Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion for ever. . . . It is good for me to adhere to my God."† The Christian who, moved by the desire of attaining to perfection, embraces the state of virginity, can say with the royal prophet: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance."‡

* 1 Cor. vii. 32.

† Ps. lxxii. 28.

‡ Ps. xv. 5.

Q. For what other reason is virginity a happier state than marriage ?

A. Because it preserves the soul from the solitudes, troubles, embarrassments and perplexities inseparable from the state of marriage.

Q. Is the doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding celibacy and virginity founded on weighty motives ?

A. Yes, it rests, 1, on the very words of Jesus Christ ; 2, on the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul, and of other sacred writers ; 3, on the most venerable examples of holy personages of the Old Testament ; 4, on the choice made by God of a virgin, in the person of Mary, to be the Mother of the Redeemer of the world ; 5, on the constant practice of the Church, from the very first ages ; 6, on the example of an immense number of saints in all ages of Christianity ; 7, on the magnificent and touching eulogiums of the Fathers of the Church on virginity ; 8, on reason enlightened by faith.

Q. What has Jesus Christ said respecting celibacy and virginity ?

A. The resolution of a soul which embraces this state, in order to gain the kingdom of heaven, was praised by the Saviour as an

heroical act, deserving a peculiar reward. In answer to a question put to Him by the Pharisees, He declared that the conjugal union could not be dissolved ; whereupon His disciples said to Him : “ if the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry.” Jesus observed, that this was a truth not comprehended by all, but that, nevertheless, there were those who had renounced all the gratifications of sense for the kingdom of heaven.*

Q. What is the doctrine of St. Paul on Christian celibacy and holy virginity ?

A. This great Apostle describes this state as of high perfection, and greatly superior to that of marriage. “ I would that all men were as myself ; but every one hath his proper gift from God ; one after this manner, and another after that. Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord : but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful. I think, therefore, that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for a man so to be.—He that giveth his daughter in marriage, doth well : he that giveth her not, doth better.”†

* Matth. xix. 10.

† 1 Cor. vii.

Q. Has the Holy Ghost bestowed any eulogy on virginity in the Book of Wisdom?

A. Yes, behold the words of the inspired writer of that book : "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory ! for the memory thereof is immortal ; because it is known both with God and with men."*

Q. Has the prophet Isaias panegyricized this virtue ?

A. Yes, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church apply to celibacy and virginity what the Lord said by the mouth of this prophet : "I will give to them in my house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than sons and daughters : I will give them an everlasting name, which shall never perish."†

Q. Who are the principal personages, mentioned in Sacred Scripture, who have honored the state of virginity by embracing it ?

A. According to certain tradition regarding several, and on good authority respecting all, we shall name Josue, conductor of the people of God ; Elias, leader and patriarch of the order of prophets ; Jeremias, raised up by the Spirit of God to announce the adorable myste-

* Wid. iv.

Is. lvi. 5.

ries of the dolours and humiliations of the Word incarnate ; St. John the Baptist, destined to be the precursor of the Messias ; St. Paul, chosen to preach the Gospel to the nations ; St. John, the Evangelist, who, for his perfection in this virtue, merited the title of the *beloved disciple*. But above these examples, we must place that of our Blessed Lord, who was born of a virgin, and lived a virgin.

Q. Has the Church from the first ages approved and encouraged holy virginity ?

A. Yes ; the innumerable facts which attest this uninterrupted practice in the Church from the very infancy of Christianity, are so authentic, that heresy and impiety have not been able to weaken the evidence of it.

At the times of the Apostles there were as yet, indeed, no monasteries ; nevertheless, the Apostles, those men whom the Spirit of God sent to renew the face of the earth, loudly testified their zeal for virginity, consecrated by the example of the Mother of the Saviour of the world. Hence, they exhorted the faithful to celibacy. “I would that all were as myself,” exclaims St. Paul.*

* 1 Cor. vii.
3*

Q. Have the Fathers extolled Christian celibacy and virginity ?

A. Yes, they have celebrated the dignity, the sanctity and glory of that state, as assimilating man by its superior perfection to the purity and dignity of the celestial spirits. "Purity," says Tertullian, "is the flower of morality, the splendor of bodies, the ornament of both sexes, the source of the integrity of the blood, the foundation of sanctity, the character of an exalted mind."*

"How shall I be able suitably to express the glory of virginity," says St. Ambrose, "since a virgin merited to be chosen by Jesus Christ, to become the temple of the living God, in whom the divinity has not disdained to dwell corporally."†

"Virginity," say the Fathers, "is one of the principal fruits of the Incarnation, and God, by preference, dwells in the souls of virgins. This virtue raises mortal man to the angelic nature, by banishing from his mind and from his heart all earthly thoughts and affections. By this virtue, in an especial manner, does man approach the divinity. Hence, according to the

* Treatise on Chastity.

† Lib. de Virgin.

expression of the Apostle St. John in the Apocalypse,* the privilege of virgins is to "accompany the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Q. Does ecclesiastical history abound in many examples of saints who lived in celibacy and virginity?

A. Yes, it affords examples beyond number, and very remarkable ones: scarcely is there a page of Church history which does not present on this point the most edifying details. The acts of the martyrs record those wonderful heroines, to whom virginity was a thousand times dearer than life itself, and who hesitated not an instant to shed the last drop of their blood, rather than renounce that heavenly virtue. The immortal names of St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, St. Lucia, St. Dorothea and St. Agatha, are held in veneration in all those parts of the Christian world, which have remained faithful to the traditions of antiquity.

Q. Give us some account of those holy virgins and martyrs?

A. St. Cecilia suffered martyrdom in the year of our Lord, 230. Descended of a noble Roman family, she made in her youth a vow,

* Apoc. xiv. 4.

to remain all her life a virgin ; but her parents obliged her to enter on the state of marriage. The person to whom she was betrothed was a young Roman, named Valerian, still an infidel. At her request, he was instructed in the Christian faith, and was baptized by the holy pontiff, St. Urban I. They distributed all their possessions among the poor, lived in perfect continency, and suffered a glorious martyrdom rather than offend God.

St. Jerome says, “ that the tongues and pens of all nations are employed in the praises of St. Agnes, who overcame both the cruelty of tyrants and the tenderness of her age, being only thirteen, and crowned the glory of chastity with that of martyrdom. Her riches and beauty excited the young noblemen of the first families in Rome, to vie with one another, who should gain her in marriage. Agnes answered them all, that she had consecrated her virginity to a heavenly Spouse, who could not be seen by mortal eyes. Her suitors finding her resolution unalterable, accused her to the governor as a Christian. At first, the mildest expressions and most inviting promises were employed to gain her ; to which Agnes paid no regard, repeating

always, she could have no other spouse than Jesus Christ. The tyrant then made use of threats, but found her soul endowed with superhuman courage, and even desirous of racks and death. At last fires were made, and iron hooks, racks, and other instruments of torture displayed before her, with threats of immediate execution. The young virgin surveyed them with an undaunted eye, expressed her joy at the sight, and even offered herself to the rack. She was then dragged before the idols, and commanded to offer incense, "but," says St. Ambrose,* "she could by no means be compelled to move her hands, except to make the sign of the cross." The governor, seeing his measures ineffectual, said he would send her to a house of prostitution, where what she prized so highly should be exposed to the insults of the debauchees. Agnes answered that Jesus Christ was too jealous of the purity of his spouses, to suffer it to be violated in such a manner, for He was their defender. "You may," said she, "stain your sword with my blood, but you will never be able to profane my body, consecrated to Christ." The governor was so in-

* Lib. i. de Virginitate.

censed at this, that he ordered her to be immediately led to the public brothel, with liberty to all persons to abuse her person at pleasure. Many young profligates ran thither, but were seized with such awe at the sight of the saint, that they durst not approach her; one only excepted, who, attempting to be rude to her, was that very instant, by a flash, as it were, of lightning from heaven, struck blind, and fell trembling to the ground. His companions terrified, took him up and carried him to Agnes, who, by her prayers to God for him, restored him to his sight and health. The governor, maddened with rage at seeing himself baffled by a young Christian virgin of thirteen, condemned her to be beheaded. "Agnes, transported with joy at hearing this sentence, went to the place of execution more cheerfully," says St. Ambrose, "than others go to their wedding." She made a short prayer, bowed down her neck to adore God and receive the stroke of death. The spectators wept to see so beautiful and tender a virgin loaded with fetters, and to behold her fearless under the sword of the executioner, while, with a trembling hand, he cut off her head at one stroke.

Tertullian, in his *Apology for the Christians*, makes use of the following words relative to the holy virgins and martyrs: "By condemning the Christian maid rather to the lewd youth than to the lion, you acknowledge that a stain of purity is more dreaded by us than any torments or death. Yet your crafty cruelty avails you not: it rather serves to gain men over to our holy religion."

St. Lucia, virgin and martyr, suffered death in the year of our Lord 304. She was educated by her mother Eutychia, in great piety, and promised at a tender age to serve God in a state of perpetual virginity. She made this vow in private, even without the knowledge of her mother. When this latter proposed marriage to her, the young virgin, without declaring her intention, ingeniously postponed the execution of the project, with the hope that Providence would come to her aid. Nor was her hope vain. Her mother suffered from a dangerous malady, during four years, without experiencing any advantage from the resources of medicine, which she employed for her recovery. Deeply afflicted at the sad state in which she beheld her, Lucia persuaded her to

make a pilgrimage to Catana, in order to ask of God the restoration of her health, *at the tomb of St. Agatha*. She accompanied her to the place. Heaven deigned to hear the prayers of filial piety. The young virgin profited by the circumstance, to make known her vow to her mother, who, full of gratitude for the grace received, did not hesitate to allow her to fulfil her engagement.

The young man to whom Lucia had been promised was a pagan. Furious at seeing his pretensions and hopes frustrated, he denounced her as a Christian. The judge condemned her to be exposed in a house of debauchery; but God watched over her purity, and no one dared approach her. The torments employed to overcome her constancy were equally unsuccessful. She was remanded to prison, all covered with wounds, where she died in sentiments of the most edifying resignation and celestial joy.

St. Dorothea, virgin and martyr, was horribly tormented by order of Fabricius, governor of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, who wished to force her to marry or to sacrifice to idols. St. Dorothea persisted in her first resolution, and even converted two dissolute women appointed to

seduce her. Unable to shake her constancy, the judge condemned her to be beheaded. She had the consolation of obtaining from God the conversion of a young pagan, named Theophylus, who derided her chastity and faith.

St. Agatha, martyred at Catana in the year 251, under the persecution of Decius, had consecrated herself to God from her tenderest years. Quintianus, a man of consular dignity, informed of the beauty and immense riches of Agatha, ordered her to be brought before his tribunal, in the hope of intimidating her by his menaces, and of satisfying, by this means, his passion and avarice. The young virgin, seeing herself in the hands of her persecutors, prayed thus: "Jesus Christ, sovereign Lord of all things, Thou beholdest my heart, Thou knowest its only desire is that Thou be the sole Lord of all I possess. Thou art my Pastor and my God! I am thy sheep, grant me the grace to conquer the demon." Indignant at her inflexible resistance, Quintianus gave her in charge to a dissolute woman, named Aphrodisia, who, together with her daughters, led publicly a licentious life. Full of confidence in the divine bounty, Agatha lost not her cour-

age ; she redoubled the fervor of her prayer, which was accompanied with torrents of tears. Protected by heaven, she suffered no insult during the month she passed in the house of Aphrodisia. Being again conducted before the tribunal of Quintianus, she maintained her fidelity to Jesus Christ. The judge ordered her face to be disfigured and bruised. On the following day she was stretched on the rack, on which she exhausted the patience and cruelty of the torturer. Infuriated at seeing himself overcome by the heroic patience of the saint, Quintianus ordered deep gashes to be made on her breasts, which, afterwards, he caused to be entirely cut off. "Cruel tyrant," replied Agatha, "art thou not ashamed to inflict this outrage on me, thou who didst receive suck from the breasts of thy mother?" God consoled her by the miraculous cure of her wounds, restoring her breasts, and filling the prison with a celestial light. Four days after, Quintianus ordered her naked body to be rolled over potsherds mixed up with burning coals. Sustained by divine power, Agatha addressed this prayer to the God of martyrs and the Spouse of virgins : "My Lord and my God,

Thou hast preserved me from my cradle ; it is Thou who hast banished from my heart the love of the world, and Thou hast given me the patience requisite to sustain me under suffering ; receive 'Thou my soul." Her prayer was heard ; she expired at its close.

Q. What does reason, enlightened by faith, teach respecting Christian virginity ?

A. That virginity gives dignity to man, ennobles his soul and body, and approximates him in some measure to the divinity.

Q. Is it not rash and presumptuous to embrace so perfect a state ?

A. By no means ; provided it be done after mature consideration, after having implored the lights and graces of the Holy Ghost, consulted enlightened and virtuous persons, and employed all other means, which Christian prudence suggests, in order to be assured of the divine will.

Q. Should Christian parents rejoice, when any of their children desire to consecrate themselves to God in a state of virginity and celibacy ?

A. Far from opposing so holy a vocation, it is their duty to second it by their prayers and wise counsels, placing the fullest confidence in

God, that he will amply requite them for the sacrifice they shall have made for His glory, either by granting them other children, or otherwise pouring down His benedictions on their family. They should bear in mind that the Almighty recompensed the mother of the young Samuel by the birth of five other children;* and the sacrifice made by Abraham of Isaac, obtained for him that innumerable posterity whence descended the seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.†

* 1 Kin. ii. 20, 21.

† Gen. 22, 18.

CHAPTER IV.**OF THE PREPARATORY DISPOSITIONS FOR RECEIVING WORTHILY THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE.**

Q. What are the remote dispositions by which Christians ought to prepare themselves for the sacrament of marriage ?

A. The principal dispositions are, 1. Prayer, in order to ask of God the grace of knowing one's vocation ; 2. Purity of intention ; 3. A choice made according to Christian views ; 4. To consult one's parents in a matter of such importance.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE OBLIGATION OF CONSULTING GOD ON ONE'S VOCATION TO THE MARRIAGE STATE.

Q. Is not the vocation to the marriage state sufficiently indicated by natural inclination, as well as by the views of Providence, respecting the propagation of the human race ?

A. No ; nature and the Creator do not call all to the state of marriage. It is, indeed, the general vocation of mortals, but, nevertheless, a Christian is not the less bound to consult God before determining on that step, in order to know if he ought to engage in that state : 1, to ascertain whether God may not call him to a more perfect state ; 2, to see if he have applied himself to acquire those virtues which the various obligations and dangers of the state of marriage demand of him, lest, by entering on it too inconsiderately, he endanger the salvation of his soul.

Q. Would the defect of a vocation to the marriage state expose one to any sad consequences ?

A. Most certainly ; because its obligations are manifold, its troubles often almost insupportable, and its temptations of a very delicate nature.

Q. To what danger would the Christian expose himself who would not pray to God to make known his vocation ?

A. Such a person should justly fear, lest the Lord might punish him by the withdrawal of His graces.

Q. Would the privation of the graces, *called graces of one's state*, be a great punishment for such a Christian ?

A. Yes ; because, without the abundant graces of each state, it is morally impossible for a man faithfully to fulfil the duties of his state. Thus it would be most difficult for one engaged in the married state, without vocation, to support the difficulties which are inseparable from it, and to conquer the temptations to which it exposes him.

Q. When the Christian has ascertained that he is called to the marriage state, what must he do to procure the favor and direction of God ?

40 VOCATION TO THE MARRIAGE STATE :

A. 1. He should have recourse to fervent and frequent prayer. Faith assures us that a good wife (and the same is to be said of a good husband,) is, in a particular manner, the gift of God : “a house and riches,” says the Wise man, “are given by parents, but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord.”* 2. To be diligent in all the duties of a good life, which, the Scripture assures us, is an effectual means to obtain a good wife from God : “a good wife is a good portion, she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds.”†

Q. Does Scripture afford any examples on this point ?

A. Yes ; Abraham sending his principal servant into his country to take a wife for his son Isaac, thus spoke to him : “the Lord, in whose sight I walk, will send his angel with thee, and will direct thy way, and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my own kindred.”‡ When Abraham’s servant arrived at his master’s country, in which he was an entire stranger, he began by a most earnest prayer to God for his direction, and everything succeeded with him

* Prov. xix. 14. † Eccl. xxvi. 3. ‡ Gen. xxiv. 40.

according to his wish.* Sarah also had recourse to the same means of finding the favor of God, with regard to a husband, and found it effectually to her great consolation.† And the happy effects of the presence of Jesus Christ at the marriage of Cana, are recorded, to show us how great a blessing He brings to those marriages which He favors.‡

* Gen. xxiv. 12.

† Tob. iii.

‡ Jo. ii.

CHAPTER VI.

ON PURITY OF INTENTION.

Q. What intention ought Christians to have in entering the marriage state ?

A. Such as Almighty God had in the institution of marriage. 1. That they may be of mutual help to each other : “ it is not good,” said God, when He instituted marriage, “ for man to be alone, let us make him a help like to himself ;” * that is, to assist him in the government of his family, in the management of his temporal affairs, in the good education of his children, in bearing the cares, pains and toils of this mortal life, and in securing a happy eternity. 2. To perpetuate upon earth the true adorers of the Eternal God ; not so much that they may inherit the temporal riches of their parents, as that they may be brought up in the fear of God, increase the number of His

* Gen. 2.

faithful servants, and become, one day, glorious saints in heaven. 3. That they may therein find a remedy against incontinency ; hence St. Paul says : “for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband ;” though he declares, “to the unmarried and to widows, it is good for them if they so continue, even as I, but if they do not contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to be burnt ;”^{*} to show that marriage is also intended as a remedy to those who are free to choose, and have not the gift of continency. Chastity is certainly a most sublime virtue, and a life of celibacy is, without all doubt, a more perfect state than that of marriage, as we have seen above ; but then it is a particular gift of God, which all do not receive. If a person, free from any obligations of leading a single life, finds that he has not received it, knowing his weakness, he may lawfully and laudably have recourse to marriage, to preserve himself from the danger of ruining his soul.

Q. Who are those who sin against purity of intention ?

^{*} 1 Cor. 7.

A. Those who seek more to gratify their passions, than to promote the honor and glory of God their Creator.

Q. What does experience teach us respecting those who enter on the state of marriage through carnal and interested motives?

A. In general, they find themselves sadly disappointed. The pleasures, with the imagination of which they flattered themselves, quickly disappear, and the greater part soon look upon their new state as a cruel bondage, which presses heavily upon them.

Q. Does the sacred volume offer any examples of the frightful justice of God on those who embraced that state through sensual motives?

A. Yes, as in the case of the first husbands of Sarah, the wife of the young Tobias. The same is seen in the unlawful marriages contracted by the children of God, as mentioned in the sixth chapter of Genesis, which brought on the universal deluge.

Q. Mention at large the misfortune which befel the first husbands of Sarah?

A. It is thus related in the book of Tobias. When Tobias and the angel who accompanied

him, under the form of a young man, had arrived at the city of Rages, the angel said to Tobias : " here is one whose name is Raguel, a near kinsman of thy tribe ; and he hath a daughter named Sara, but he hath no son, nor any other daughter besides her ; ask her of her father, and he will give her to thee to wife." Then Tobias said : " I hear that she hath been given to seven husbands, and they all died : moreover, I have heard that a devil killed them. Now I am afraid, lest the same thing happen to me also : and whereas I am the only child of my parents, I should bring down their old age with sorrow to hell."*

Q. What counsel did the angel give Tobias, and what did he do to avoid a similar misfortune ?

A. It is thus related in the book of Tobias : " Then the angel Raphael said to him : hear me and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding, over

* Tobias vi.

them the devil hath power. But thou, when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her. And when the third night is passed, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for the love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children.”*

* Tobias vi.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE OBLIGATION OF CHILDREN TO OBTAIN THE CONSENT OF THEIR PARENTS TO THEIR MARRIAGE.

Q. Why is the consent of parents required for marriage ?

A. For several strong and weighty reasons :

1. On account of the respect, obedience, and love, which children owe to their parents by the law of nature, and by the express law of God : "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst be long lived upon the land." All this imperatively demands, that in an affair of so great consequence to the future happiness both of the children and the parents, nothing should be concluded without their concurrence.
2. Among the people of God, in the Old Law, parents had the principal authority in marrying their children, and hence, when Almighty God speaks to them on this subject, he addresses

himself only to the parents. Thus, when he forbids them to marry with the nations professing a false religion, he says: "thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son."* And the Wise Man speaks thus: "Marry thy daughter well, and thou shalt do a great work, and give her to a wise man."† Hence we find that the servants of God exactly followed this rule of marrying with the advice and consent of their parents; as we read of Isaac, Jacob, and Sampson; and Esau is blamed as having displeased his parents by doing the contrary. 3. The Church of Christ, in the Council of Trent, declares, that she always did detest and prohibit marriages of this kind.‡ 4. Young persons should well consider this rule of conduct laid down by the Holy Ghost: "my son do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done;"§ and how much more in a matter of such importance, and where there is so much danger of taking a false step? 5. Experience shows, that marriages made against the advice of parents, prove for the most part

* Deut. vii. 3. † Eccl. vii. 27.

‡ Sess. xxiv. c. 1. § Eccl. xxxii. 23.

unhappy. The disturbance of families, dissensions between husband and wife, and the bad education of children, are commonly the fatal consequences of such marriages. The disregard of parental authority, and the motives whence such marriages flow, which generally are unbridled passions, dangerous counsels of inconsiderate or perfidious friends, and sometimes criminal intrigues, banish the Spirit of God from them, and deprive them of his blessing.

Q. What does the holy doctor S. Ambrose say on this subject ?

A. "Christian modesty cannot suffer that children marry without advice ; let them submit to the judgment of their parents."* He cites the example of pagans and of pagan lawgivers, by whom children were forbidden to contract marriage without the consent of the parents.

Q. In what cases can parents conscientiously refuse their consent to the marriage of their children ?

A. In several cases ; as 1. If the proposed marriage is likely to disturb the peace of their family, or to be a disgrace to them. 2. If they

* Lib. de Abraham, ult. cap.

judge it will prove highly detrimental to their children, who, blinded by passion, do not perceive the fatal consequences of it. 3. If it be such as endangers the loss of their religion, or exposes their children to the like danger. 4. If it be contrary to the laws of their country.

Q. But if parents merely through avarice, caprice, or other such motive, should refuse their consent to a reasonable marriage of their children, would these be obliged to abstain from it?

A. In such extreme cases, children should consult disinterested, enlightened and virtuous persons: and where the laws of the country make no provision, ecclesiastical superiors, after having maturely considered the particular case, and made the suitable representations to the parents, can authorize the parish priest to proceed to the celebration of the marriage.

Q. Ought children to attach importance to the blessing of their parents, especially at the time of their marriage?

A. Yes, most certainly; the Sacred Scriptures teach that the Patriarchs regarded the benediction reserved for their children as the source of prosperity to their family, and the children sought it as the most valuable portion of their inheritance.

Isaac, perceiving that he had not long to live, prepared to bless his eldest son, Esau. Jacob, instructed by the counsels of his mother, Rebecca, and directed by an all-ruling Providence, received the blessing destined for his elder brother. "Esau having heard this, roared out with a great cry, and being in great consternation said: bless me also my father. Isaac said: thy brother hath got thy blessing. And Esau said to him: hast thou not reserved me also a blessing? I beseech thee to bless me also. And when he wept with a loud cry, Isaac said: in the fat of the earth, and in the dew of heaven, shall thy blessing be."*

The patriarch Joseph, hearing that his father was approaching his end, made haste to present his two sons, Manasses and Ephraim, before him, that he might impart to them his benediction. He did so in the following words. "God in whose sight my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, God that feedeth me from my youth to this day; the Angel that delivereth me from all evils, bless these boys; and let my name be called upon them, and the names of

* Gen. xxvii.

my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they grow into a multitude on the earth." And afterwards Jacob, calling all his sons, announcing to each his particular destiny, he blessed them.

Again we read as follows: "Now the days drew near that Mathathias should die, and he said to his sons; Now therefore, O my sons, be ye zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers consider through all generations that none that trust in God fail take heed to the precepts of the law. And he blessed them, and was joined to his fathers."*

Q. Should children fear the malediction of their parents?

A. Most certainly; the Scripture gives us a terrible example in the malediction uttered by Noe against Cham and Chanaan for the great irreverence they were guilty of towards their parent. In fulfilment of this malediction, the Lord ordered the Israelites to exterminate all the inhabitants of the promised land, occupied by the descendants of Chanaan.†

* 1 Mach. ii. † Gen. ix.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT VIEWS AND MOTIVES PARENTS OUGHT
TO HAVE IN THE CHOICE OF A HUSBAND OR
WIFE FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

Q. What ought to be the first object of the attention of parents, when about to give their children in marriage?

A. Their principal solicitude should be to select a person full of the fear of God.

The fear of God is the only solid foundation of the prosperity of families, as it is the source and principle of good order in society. Every day verifies the words of the royal prophet: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." *

Q. Do the Sacred Scriptures present to parents who are about to settle their children

* Ps. cxxvi.

in life, any examples of wisdom worthy of their imitation ?

A. Yes ; they afford them the most instructive models in the conduct of the patriarchs, and especially in that of Abraham, Isaac and Tobias.

Q. How did Abraham act in order to provide a wife for his beloved son Isaac ?

A. Abraham possessed the esteem and confidence of the inhabitants of the land of Chanaan, where Providence had placed him. A prince of this country, Abimelech, king of Gerara, sought an alliance with him. He then could easily have obtained a matrimonial union for his son with one of the most distinguished families of the country ; but such a thought never presented itself to the mind of this *father of believers*, knowing as he did that the anger of heaven hung over the descendants of Chanaan, cursed by Noe. He moreover saw that they were buried in the darkness and excesses of idolatry. He accordingly turned his eyes towards the birth-place of his fathers, where the knowledge of the true God was not extinguished. He bound by oath the steward of his house, who was deserving of his confidence,

to select in the country of his ancestors, a wife for his son Isaac. "Swear by the Lord the God of heaven and earth, that thou take not a wife for my son of the daughters of the Chanaanites, among whom I dwell; but that thou go to my own country and kindred, and take a wife thence for my son Isaac."* Eliezer, Abraham's servant, swore he would fulfil the designs and orders of his master. Before his departure, and during the journey, he ceased not to implore the protection of God, in whom he placed entire confidence, for the success of the important mission with which he was entrusted. "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, meet me to-day, I beseech thee, and show kindness to my master Abraham."† When he perceived in the person of Rebecca, the spouse destined by heaven for Isaac, profoundly adoring the Lord, he exclaimed with gratitude: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not taken his mercy and truth from my master, and hath brought me the straight way into the house of my master's brother."‡

Q. Did Isaac imitate Abraham's example, when about to select a wife for his son Jacob?

* Gen. xxiv. † Id. ‡ Id.

A. Yes ; for animated as he was by the same faith, he took the same precautions. "Take not," said he to Jacob, "a wife of the stock of Chanaan, but go and take a journey to Mesopotamia of Syria, to the house of Bathuel thy mother's father, and take thee a wife thence of the daughters of Laban thy uncle."* Then he gave him his benediction : "God Almighty bless thee, that thou mayst be a multitude of people."†

Q. Did the just Tobias, while a captive at Nineve, allow his son to marry into a family of that country, whose inhabitants were idolaters ?

A. By no means ; heir of the faith of Abraham, he was actuated by the same principles. Hence the young Tobias, conducted by Providence, had the happiness of finding a spouse in the family of Raguel, a kinsman of his father. "Be not afraid," said the angel to Raguel, "to give thy daughter to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife : therefore another could not have her." Then Raguel said : "I doubt not but God hath regarded my prayers and tears in his sight. And I believe he hath therefore made you come

* Gen. xxviii. 1.

† Ib. 3.

to me, that this maid might be married to one of her own kindred, according to the law of Moses. . . . And doubt not but I will give her to thee. And taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying: The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may he join you together, and fulfil his blessing in you. . . . And Anna said to her daughter Sara: Be of good cheer, my daughter, the Lord of heaven give thee joy for the trouble thou hast undergone.” *

The day on which Tobias prepared to leave, in company with his spouse, the house of Raguel, his father-in-law said to him: “The holy Angel of the Lord be with you in your journey, and bring you through safe. . . . And the parents taking their daughter, kissed her, and let her go; admonishing her to honor her father and mother-in-law, to love her husband, to take care of the family, to govern the house, and to behave herself irreprehensibly.” † These brief words, comprise all that Sara should do to accomplish the duties of her state of life.

* Tobias vii. † Id. x.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE DISCERNMENT AND MATURITY NECESSARY IN MAKING CHOICE OF A HUSBAND OR WIFE.

Q. Why should a Christian implore the light of God before marriage ?

A. Because it suffices not, either as it regards happiness here, or eternal felicity hereafter, to be called to the state of marriage : one should moreover employ a religious discernment in the choice of a companion.

Q. Do you believe that when God calls a person to the state of marriage, he destines a particular person for each one ?

A. There can be no doubt of it, from what we read in the sacred volume.

Q. What do we read touching this matter ?

A. We read, 1. That God formed Eve for Adam, that Rebecca was prepared for Isaac, that Sara was reserved for Tobias, that He had chosen Esther for Assuerus.

2. In the Book of Proverbs we read : “ house and riches are given by parents ; but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord.” * 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ assures us that “ the very hairs of our head are counted,” † and “ that a hair of our head shall not perish.” ‡ If then the Lord deigns to extend his paternal solicitude to the very hairs of our head, can we suppose that his divine providence should remain indifferent as to a choice, by which our condition in time and eternity is so much influenced ?

Q. Is it not sufficient that the two persons agree together in disposition, age, birth and fortune ?

A. These considerations should not be neglected ; but they are far from constituting the true happiness of the married couple, or that of their respective families, and much less the interests of religion and those of society.

Q. What more is required ?

A. Suitable qualities of the mind for the government of the family, for the education of the children ; and above all other considerations, for the mutual edification and sanctification of each other, are of paramount importance.

* Chap. xix. † Math. x. ‡ Luc. xxi.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE CHOICE OF A WIFE.

Q. What are the most essential qualities to be looked for in a wife ?

A. They may be reduced to eight :

1. The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. "The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."*

2. Modesty, chastity of life, and solid virtue. "A holy and modest woman is grace upon grace, and no price is worthy of a continent soul."†
 "A virtuous wife is a good portion ; she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds.‡

3. Goodness of character. "Happy is the husband of a good wife : for the number of his days is double."§ "He that hath found a good

* Prov. xxxi. 30.

† Eccl. xxvi. 19.

‡ Id. iii.

§ Id. i.

wife, hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord.”*

4. A judicious, sensible and discreet person : “the grace of a diligent woman shall delight her husband. . . . Such is a wise and silent woman, and there is nothing so much worth as a well instructed soul (woman).”†

5. Devotedness to domestic concerns, and a spirit of order in the management of the house. St. Paul says : “Teach the young (women) to be wise, to be discreet, having a care of the house.”‡

6. Freedom from all excessive love of dress, of company, of worldly display.

7. An honorable reputation, as regards not only the person whom one has in view, but also the family of which she is born. After the loss of the grace of God, the greatest is that of one’s reputation. The Spirit of God declares : “A good name is better than riches.”§ Again : “Take care of a good name ; for this shall continue with thee ; more than a thousand treasures, precious and great.”||

8. A fortune honorably obtained : a husband

* Prov. xviii. 22. † Eccl. xxvi. 18. ‡ Ep. ad Tit. ii. 5.

§ Prov. xxii. || Eccl. xli. 15

who should accept of a dowry which was the fruit of iniquity, would participate in the injustice before God, and would expose himself to disquietudes and legal vexations before men.

Q. Has not the Holy Ghost pointed out the qualifications which a prudent man ought to seek for in the person he is about to choose for his wife ?

A. Yes ; they are admirably laid down in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs : “ What shall I say to you, O my beloved ? ” What advice shall I give you to render you happy ? The most important is, that you choose for a wife a person who is replete with wisdom and virtue. “ Who shall find a valiant woman ? Her price is from afar, and from the uttermost coasts of the world. The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of the spoils of enemies,” in order to the support of his family. His confidence in a valiant woman shall not be misplaced. For “ she shall render to him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She hath sought wool and flax ” for the maintenance of his house, “ and hath wrought them with a wise and skilful hand.” By her foresight and talent “ she is

like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar." Her vigilance is not less wonderful than her industry. She rises before day to provide for the subsistence of her servants, and distributes victuals to her maidens. Attentive to all that may result to the interest of the family, she purchases a field which appeared fertile, and with the labor of her hands she hath planted a vineyard. "She hath girded her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm. She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." Thus she evinces her capability of executing great or smaller undertakings, but without being impelled by a spirit of cupidity and avarice. For "she hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor.

She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed with double garments.

She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry; fine linen, and purple is her covering.

Her husband is honorable in the gates (in the public assemblies) when he sitteth among the senators of the land."

•

“Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day.

She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue.

She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle.

Her children rose up, and called her blessed ; her husband, and he praised her.

Many daughters have gathered together riches : thou hast surpassed them all.”

Such ought to be, my son, continues the mother of Solomon, the person whom you shall choose for a wife. In this choice you should consider virtue more than beauty.

“Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain : the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her works praise her in the gates,” (in the public assembly).

Q. What are the principal features marked out by the Holy Ghost in the strong woman ?

A. They are the following :

The efforts she makes to gain the confidence of her husband.

The spirit of order in directing the economy of her house.

Her care and solicitude in providing for the wants of her children and servants.

Her constant application to labor.

Her activity, which she carries even to the point of interrupting her sleep.

Her industry in profiting by every thing which may be to the advantage of the family, and her foresight in making profitable purchases.

Her wisdom and condescension in becoming all to all, and in taking part in the smaller as well as in the more important concerns.

Her charity towards the poor.

Her courage and devotedness under every trial.

Her vigilance over all that passes in the house.

Her prudence in conversation, and her unalterable sweetness.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE CHOICE OF A HUSBAND.

Q. Does not the choice of a husband merit most serious attention ?

A. Most certainly ; the same motives, the same interests, which demand of a young man to use all the solicitude of Christian prudence in the choice of a wife, require her to employ equal circumspection, maturity of reflection, and advice in the choice of him to whom she is to be united in the most close and irrevocable manner.

Q. Would the consequences of an unhappy choice be still worse for the female part than for the male ?

A. Yes ; because as marriage places the wife under the power of the husband and dependent on him, an error on her part would render the conjugal union more onerous.

Q. What advice does Saint Augustin give to persons about to make choice of a husband ?

A. S. Augustin in speaking to young Christian women about to marry, exhorts them to prefer above all others, a religious and faithful man, one who is virtuous, wise, and steady in his habits ; he advises them not to be dazzled by eminence of birth, by greatness of fortune, by elevation of office, or by the beauty of their person.*

Q. Ought not the indifference in matters of religion, and the dissoluteness of morals, which so generally prevail, render young persons still more reserved and more circumspect in the choice of a husband ?

A. Most certainly, for the Holy Ghost has declared that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;" the absence of this restraint must pervert the mind and corrupt the heart.

Q. What, besides the absence of the fear of the Lord, are the other defects which a young person should most apprehend in making choice of a husband ?

* Lib. de Matr.

A. Gambling, intemperance, the frequenting of bad company, the love of gain which conducts to hazardous enterprises and speculations, and a profession incompatible with the duties of a Christian life.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SAD CONSEQUENCES OF ANY ERROR IN
CHOOSING A HUSBAND OR A WIFE.

Q. What is the principal reason that so many marriages are unhappy, and disgraced by the most shameful scandals ?

A. Because, in choosing a husband or a wife, persons omit to follow the holy rules we have just laid down. Passion and interest are consulted rather than virtue and religion. The soul is sacrificed to the body ; and as the Almighty reproached the Jews, so there are in our days very many parents “who sacrifice their sons and daughters to devils.”*

Q. What are the consequences of the neglect of these salutary maxims ?

A. God is despised, but not with impunity : “be not deceived, God is not mocked.”†

Experience speaks more loudly and more

* Ps. cv. † Gal. vi.

forcibly on the subject than words. How many young women under a heavy yoke from which nothing but death can relieve them, pass a weary life in disease and crime, under the savage treatment of him to whom they owe respect and submission. Treated like slaves, they are condemned to behold their poor children perish under their eyes, delivered up to the empire of the demon by the influence of bad example, and by the licentious and impious discourses of a father who hastens to teach them vice, even before they can well understand all the extent of its horror.

How many men are there who are tempted to curse the day they bound themselves for life to a haughty and inconstant companion ; to one who possesses not the fear of God, an idolater of herself, thirsting for pleasures, having no care or solicitude for the good order or economy of her house ; neglecting the education of her children, as if she had not borne them, and preparing, by her foolish expenses and prodigality, the ruin of an ample fortune.

Such husbands are truly unhappy ; but they are generally obliged to reproach themselves with want of foresight and with wilful blindness.

They could not imagine, they would not believe, that in obtaining a large fortune, or a beauty with which they were enamored, they prepared for themselves cruel woes and irremediable evils.

Q. What do the Sacred Scriptures say regarding the sad consequences of an error made in the choice of a wife ?

A. "A wicked woman abateth the courage, and maketh a heavy countenance; and a wounded heart."*

"All malice is short to the malice of a woman; let the lot of sinners fall upon her."†

"Look not upon a woman's beauty, and desire not a woman for beauty."‡

"As a yoke of oxen that is moved to and fro, so also is a wicked woman; he that hath hold of her, is as he that taketh hold of a scorpion."§

"It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman. The wickedness of a woman changeth her face; and she darkeneth her countenance as a bear."||

Q. Is the case of the wife who has committed

* Eccl. xxv. 31. † Id. 26. ‡ Id. 23. § Id. xxvi. 10.

|| Id. xxv. 23, 24.

an error in the choice of a husband, less deplorable and less worthy of compassion ?

A. It may be said that such a one is condemned to a perpetual martyrdom, for if he has not the fear of God before his eyes, "his ways shall be at all times stained," according to the expression of the Scriptures.

What check, indeed, shall such a man have against the violence of his passions ? If his inclination lead him to gamble, to intemperance, to criminal associations, if jealousy, anger, thirst of gain, ambition, take possession of his heart, where shall he receive courage and force to resist the impetuous torrent ? The happy dispositions of nature, and the principles imbibed during the time of education, will form but a weak barrier, which temptations and the facility of self-indulgence will quickly break down. The unhappy husband, "who shall have banished God from his heart and from his mind," according to the words of the angel to Tobias, will think only of satisfying his passions, and "over such the devil hath power."*

Q. Is there no remedy for those who have committed an error in their choice, and who

* Tobias vi. 17.

have rashly engaged in the bonds of marriage?

A. Yes; a certain, a consoling, and an only resource is left, which is the infinite goodness of God. God assures us: "as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him, for he knoweth our frame." * And lest we should want for confidence in his mercy, he charges his prophets to intimate to us very frequently, "that he wishes not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." † In order to profit by this resource, such persons should turn their eyes towards God, should like the prodigal son acknowledge their faults; make a good confession in order to repair them; and humbly accept in expiation of the past all that may be painful either in their domestic relations or in society. The grace of God will heal all their wounds, and those who, perhaps, now pronounce imprecations on the day which witnessed their union, will soon experience the fulfilment of the words of the Saviour: "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." ‡

* Ps. cii. 13, 14. † Ezech. xxxiii. ‡ Matt. xi. 28.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE PRECAUTIONS OF CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE
IN REGARD TO INTERVIEWS BETWEEN PER-
SONS PROMISED IN MARRIAGE.

Q. Is not the intimacy which precedes marriage attended with many dangers ?

A. Yes ; and a sad experience attests that the honor, innocence, and virtue of both sexes are too often therein compromised.

Q. What is the first precaution to be taken by persons who are desirous of being married ?

A. The holy Council of Trent exhorts them not to dwell in the same house.* S. Charles Borromeo exhorts bishops to prohibit the same to the newly betrothed. The statutes of several dioceses threaten with excommunication fathers and mothers who sanction such an abuse on the part of their children. They also require the parish priests to suspend the publi-

* Sess. xxiv. 1.

cation of the bans until the betrothed be actually separated. The wise and grave motives for these ecclesiastical laws, are derived from knowledge of the human heart, and are a consequence of the divine precept which forbids exposing oneself to the occasion of sin. "He who loves danger shall perish therein."*

Q. Which is the second precaution ?

A. That the promised couple should not visit, except in the presence of their parents or other prudent persons.

Q. Is it not necessary that persons should know the disposition of each other before marriage ?

A. The Church is not opposed to all interviews between persons who are about to be married. Jacob is not blamed in the Sacred Scripture for having sought during many years the hand of Rachel ; but Christian prudence and wise regulations require that decorum and modesty preside over all intercourse deemed necessary between the affianced preparatory to their approaching union. When Rebecca first beheld Isaac, " she took her cloak and covered

* Eccl. iii. 27.

herself.”* This precaution, inspired by modesty, offers to young persons about to settle themselves in life, an example which their virtue ought to appreciate.

The rituals and constitutions of various dioceses enjoin on the parish priests to warn the fathers and mothers of those promised in marriage, not to allow their children to associate with the persons to whom they are promised, unless in their own presence ; that all familiarities contrary to Christian decorum be prevented, and that secret appointments and isolated promenades, be not suffered on any account whatsoever.

Q. On what are these precautions founded ?

A. On the advice given by S. Paul to the Ephesians : “ give not place to the devil.”†

Q. Is it dangerous to neglect the above mentioned precautions ?

A. Experience shows that they are necessary. In consequence of culpable neglect in these matters, many young persons appear before the ministers of religion to be married, having their souls stained with crime. Such persons instead of expecting the nuptial bene-

* Gen. xxiv. 65.

† Eph. iv. 27.

diction, might more properly borrow the words of the prophet, and in the humiliation of their soul exclaim: "My soul shall weep in secret, and my eyes shall run down with tears, for the crown of my glory is fallen down from my head."*

* Jer. xiii.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE IMPEDIMENTS OF MARRIAGE.

Q. What is meant by the impediments of marriage?

A. As marriage is of vast importance, for the good of individuals, for the peace of the State, and for the edification of the Church, it is of the greatest necessity to take every precaution that it be established on such a footing as to render it conformable to what decency and the light of nature prescribe ; and to hinder it from being prejudicial either to the parties themselves, or to Church or State. With this view the Church has, from the earliest ages, annexed certain conditions to the celebration of this sacrament, without which, either the sacrament is rendered null and void, or those who contract it are highly criminal, and commit a grievous sin.

Q. How many kinds of impediments are there ?

A. There are two kinds : 1. Such as render the marriage null and void, and no marriage at all in the sight of God, and of his Church
2. Such as render the marriage unlawful, and criminal in those who contract it, though valid in itself. The first kind of impediments are called annulling, the second prohibitory.

CHAPTER XV.

OF PROHIBITORY IMPEDIMENTS.

Q. What are the prohibitory impediments ?

A. They are those which render the marriage unlawful, though not null.

Q. What is the meaning of a marriage being unlawful ?

A. It means that one cannot marry with certain impediments without committing a grievous sin.

Q. How many of such impediments are there ?

A. There are three : a simple vow, an ecclesiastical prohibition, and a promise of marriage.

Q. What is the vow that constitutes a prohibitory impediment ?

A. It is the simple vow of chastity, or of celibacy, or of becoming a religious.

Q. What is the impediment which arises from an ecclesiastical prohibition ?

A. It is the prohibition made to Christians :
1. Of marrying at certain times. 2. Of marrying in certain places, with certain persons, and without certain formalities.

Q. What are the times at which the church forbids the solemnizing of marriage ?

A. From the first Sunday in Advent to the Epiphany inclusively, and from the first day of Lent, to Low Sunday inclusively.

Q. Why does the church prohibit the solemnizing of marriage in Advent and Lent ?

A. Because these periods of the year are specially consecrated to recollection, prayer and penance. "The church," says Cardinal Belarmin, "desires to prevent the rejoicings usual on such occasions, lest her children be drawn away from preparing for the solemnities of Christmas and Easter."

Q. Is this prohibition of very ancient date ?

A. The Council of Laodicea, held in the fourth century, enacted it : and that of Trent renewed it, and vindicated the sanctity of the law. *

Q. How ought those persons to conduct themselves who for just reasons obtain the necessary

* Sess. xxiv.

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dispensation to have their marriage celebrated at those forbidden times ?

A. In order to conform to the spirit of the Church, they ought to get married without solemnity or parade, as the same Council of Trent recommends. The judicious Christian easily persuades himself that rejoicings and festivities at the time of marriage are not reconcileable with the humiliations and sufferings of the Eternal Word made man, which the Church at those periods proposes for the meditation of the faithful.

Q. With whom does the Church forbid marriage ?

A. With infidels, heretics, and those who have incurred excommunication.

Q. In what does the impediment of promise of marriage consist ?

A. In this, that it is unlawful for persons under a mutual promise of marriage, to enter into new engagements, until the former be duly dissolved.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE ANNULLING IMPEDIMENTS.

Q. What is meant by annulling impediments ?

A. Those which render the marriage null and void.

Q. What are the principal impediments ?

A. The following : consanguinity, affinity, public honesty, crime, a previous bond, clandestinity, solemn vows, and the Sacrament of Order.

Q. What is the impediment of consanguinity ?

A. It is the prohibition of marriage between blood relations, which extends to the fourth degree inclusively.

Q. Does the prohibition of marriage hold good, when the relationship arises from an illegitimate birth ?

A. It also extends to the fourth degree.

Q. What do you mean by the impediment of affinity ?

A. I mean that persons allied within certain degrees cannot be married.

Q. In how many ways can this affinity or alliance, which induces an impediment, be contracted ?

A. In three ways: 1. By marriage ; 2. By illicit cohabitation ; 3. By the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

Q. Who are those that become allied by marriage ?

A. The husband contracts an alliance with the blood relations of his wife ; and the wife contracts an alliance with the blood relations of her husband ; and this is called affinity.

Q. To what degree of affinity does this prohibition of marriage extend ?

A. To the fourth degree inclusively.

Q. Who are those that contract affinity by illicit cohabitation ?

A. Those who have had a similar cohabitation with the blood relations of one another.

Q. To what degree does the prohibition of marriage extend, in the case of illicit cohabitation ?

A. It extends in this case, only to the second degree.

Q. Who contract spiritual affinity in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation?

A. 1. He who baptises and confirms, 2. The person who is baptized and confirmed, 3. And the godfather and godmother.

Q. With whom does the person who baptises contract affinity?

A. He contracts affinity with the person baptized, and with his father and mother.

Q. With whom does the person baptized or confirmed contract affinity?

A. He contracts it with the person who baptizes or confirms him, and with his godfather and godmother.

Q. With whom do the godfather and godmother contract affinity?

A. With the person baptized or confirmed, and with his father and mother.

Q. In what does the impediment consist, which arises from this spiritual affinity?

A. In this, that the persons who have contracted this spiritual kindred or affinity cannot be validly married.

Q. Whence does the impediment of public honesty, or decorum arise ?

A. It proceeds from valid espousals, or from legitimate marriage not consummated.

Q. In what does the impediment of public honesty, proceeding from espousals, consist ?

A. That a person who has made a promise of marriage to another, cannot be married with the relations in the first degree of consanguinity of that person to whom such promise of marriage has been made.

Q. Are the promises of marriage made in private, and not in the Church, to be deemed true espousals ?

A. If the promise be mutual, it is equally binding, and induces the impediment of public honesty.

Q. In what consists the impediment of public honesty proceeding from marriage not consummated ?

A. That a person cannot be married to the blood relations as far as the fourth degree, of the person with whom he had contracted a former marriage, not consummated.

Q. What is the impediment of crime ?

A. Persons guilty of homicide and adultery,

with an engagement to marry, are rendered incapable of contracting marriage together.

Q. What is understood by a previous bond ?

A. A previous bond is an impediment arising from a marriage validly contracted, and not dissolved by death. Whosoever has thus contracted marriage, cannot in the lifetime of the consort, pass to second nuptials, which if he attempt, they are essentially null, as well as sacrilegious.

Q. If either party wantonly desert the other, and remain absent for many years, is the other incapable of contracting another marriage ?

A. Most certainly. No desertion however wanton, no length of absence destroys the force of the marriage bond.

Q. If it cannot be ascertained whether the party be in life, and strong grounds exist for presuming his death, is the other party prevented from a new engagement ?

A. Certain knowledge of the death of the party is required, before the other is at liberty to form a new contract. The presumptions of death requisite to authorize a second marriage should be so strong as to give moral certainty of the fact.

Q. If the party has contracted marriage a second time, and the death of the former consort cannot be ascertained after diligent inquiry, what must be done for the security of conscience ?

A. If it be certain that the former consort was alive at the time of the attempt to contract a second marriage, this was certainly null, and no right could accrue from it to either of the parties, so that they are bound to separate. In case the second contract was formed whilst both parties were conscious of the former, and uncertain of its dissolution by the death of the first consort, no right is derived from it, because it was formed in bad or doubtful faith, and they are consequently bound to separate : since we must part with the dearest objects of attachment rather than go into hell-fire. If either party was ignorant of the original marriage, or was fully assured of the death of the first consort, the party thus contracting in good faith retains his conjugal rights, until the nullity of the second contract is manifested by proof that the party was alive at the time : but the guilty party, who contracted in bad or doubtful faith, acquires no rights under the second contract.

Q. Is the separation of persons thus united necessary, if the former consort die after the second contract was made ?

A. Yes ; since the second contract was altogether null. Besides the conduct of the parties who contracted in bad faith creates the impediment crime, by reason of their adulterous connection under the veil of an attempted marriage, which prevents their being married even after the death of the other, without a special dispensation for that purpose.

Q. When the honor of families is endangered by the separation, and the children are exposed to shame and destitution, with public scandal, must it still be insisted on ?

A. Under no circumstances can it be permitted to live on in criminal intercourse. No consequences however painful or disastrous, can warrant the continuance in sin. The hand or foot which scandalizes must be cut off, the eye must be plucked out, that is, the occasion of sin must be cast away, cost what it will to our vicious nature, rather than incur eternal death.

Q. What is the impediment of clandestinity ?

A. That a person cannot be validly married

in places where the decree of the Council of Trent on this subject is published, without the presence of the parish priest and of two witnesses.

Q. What are the advantages of the impediment of clandestinity?

A. 1. It prevents youth being taken by snares and surprise, or being carried away by their passions. 2. It secures to parents and others interested, their just influence in the formation of the marriage contract. 3. And it gives to marriage a certain date and authentic character.

Q. If a person should become conscious of an annulling impediment after marriage, what is to be done?

A. The person should observe continency, and apply to the proper authority to have the impediment removed.

Q. Is the impediment arising from solemn vows, well founded?

A. Yes, it is founded in the natural and divine law, which require a man to fulfil the engagements which he has freely contracted with his Creator: "Pay thy vows to the Most High,"* says the royal prophet. And again, "I will

* Ps. xlix. 14.

pay my vows in the sight of them that fear him."* And St. Paul says of those widows, who had consecrated themselves to God, and afterwards desired to marry; "Having damnation, because they made void their first faith (vow)."†

Q. What is a solemn vow?

A. It is that which Christians take in societies recognized by the Holy See as religious orders.

Q. With which of the holy orders does the obligation of celibacy commence?

A. With sub-deaconship.

Q. Are the impediments of marriage founded on legitimate motives, and worthy of the respect of the faithful?

A. Yes, this discipline of the Church guarantees a more perfect observance of the laws of God, protects public morals and the rights of the contracting parties, as also those of their families.

* Ps. xxi. 26. † 1. Tim. v. 12.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF DISPENSATIONS.

Q. If the impediments of marriage are founded on such wise motives, why does the Church sometimes grant dispensations ?

A. The Church grants these dispensations from motives of charity ; sometimes for the public welfare, at other times for the interest of families, and for the good of the spouses. The dispensations granted to sovereigns and princes are for the public good. Other dispensations are founded in reasons of honor, the peace of families, or the preservation of a soul, whose salvation would be endangered, if the Church were not to use indulgence.

“There are cases,” says St. Thomas,” “wherein the observance of the law, whose object ought to be the good of the people, and the sanctification of their souls, would nevertheless be prejudicial to them, if vigorously

executed. In such cases the legislator dispenses him who could not observe it without injury. Every legislator is master of the law ; and he can dispense in it, in virtue of the same authority by which he made the law. As it is impossible for him to foresee every case, and as there are certain circumstances in which the law made for the general good, might cause too great injury to individuals, he can make exceptions ; or by a wise relaxation, moderate the rigor of the obligation which it imposes."

Q. What is a matrimonial dispensation ?

A. A relaxation of an impediment granted by the ecclesiastical superior for suitable reasons by virtue of which the person or persons dispensed with can validly and lawfully contract marriage.

Q. Who are the ecclesiastical superiors to whom the power of granting dispensations belongs ?

A. To the Pope and Bishops.

Q. Why are the dispensations for princes and sovereigns, and even for private individuals, when there is question of very important dispensations, reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff ?

A. Such dispensations are wisely reserved to the Holy See, both on account of the importance to be attached to them, as well as in order to render the dispensation more difficult and rare.

Q. What recommendation did the Council of Trent give respecting the concession of dispensations ?

A. It recommended that they be rarely granted, always for weighty motives, and that the spirit of avarice be not mixed up with them.

Q. Are not the dispensations for the poor given gratis ?

A. Yes ; and in certain cases they are also more easily obtained by the poor.

Q. Why is there a fine in some places exacted in granting dispensations to the wealthy ?

A. This fine is a compensation for the infraction of the general law of the Church, and the sum received is applied to works of charity and piety.

Q. What should persons particularly attend to, in applying for dispensations.

A. They should allege none but true, just and legitimate motives for the dispensation. Otherwise they would be guilty of a grievous sin, and would expose themselves to the danger of forming invalid contracts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON ESPOUSALS.

Q. What are espousals ?

A. Espousals are a mutual promise of marriage made by two persons.

Q. Are there two kinds of espousals ?

A. Yes ; one more solemn, accompanied with an oath, when the promise is made before the altar, and the priestly benediction is given to the parties. The other consists in a simple promise of marriage, which two persons mutually make, without the intervention of the minister of God.

Q. Have the simple promises of marriage, made in private, the effects of espousals ?

A. Yes ; and they produce the impediment of public honesty, mentioned above.

Q. Can a person under a promise of marriage be married to another without committing sin ?

A. No, so long as the promise is not rescinded ; for, in honor and conscience, one is bound to keep his promise ; besides, there is an annulling impediment of marriage with the blood relations in the first degree, as mentioned above.

Q. How are espousals dissolved ?

A. 1. By the mutual consent of the parties.
2. By the non-compliance with the engagement if a time be appointed for the marriage, on the part of the party not the cause of the delay.
3. By unreasonable delay, if no time be fixed.
4. By any notable change on the part of one party,—such as the entering a religious community, or the receiving of minor orders, or the departure to a distant country : in all which cases the other party is free to contract new engagements, but the party who so changes remains ordinarily bound by the espousals first contracted, so long as the fulfilment of them is possible.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE PUBLICATION OF BANS.

Q. Is the publication of bans prescribed by a general law of the Church?

A. Yes; this law was made in the commencement of the thirteenth century, and renewed by the holy Council of Trent. The Fathers of this Council order, "that the promises of marriage be published on three Sundays or festival days in succession, at the public offices of the Church, by the parish priest of the parties."*

Q. What is the object of this law?

A. To prevent clandestine marriages; to discover impediments of marriage, which might exist between the contracting parties; to prevent surprises; to afford parents and persons interested an opportunity to oppose a marriage which might interfere with their rights; and

* Sess. xxiv.

to induce the faithful to implore the light and grace of God on the spouses, who so much need the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

Q. Are the faithful bound under mortal sin to reveal the impediments known to them ?

A. There can be no doubt that they are according to the opinion of St. Thomas, whose sentiment is followed by the most learned moralists. It is a matter of most weighty importance, since it is to prevent the profanation of a sacrament, endless troubles in families, and the dishonor of children, born of an invalid marriage, who would be considered as illegitimate children. By making the revelation or denunciation of the impediment to the priest, we prevent the injustice which one of the parties would inflict on the other, who perhaps is ignorant of the impediment.

CHAPTER XX.

OF CONFESSION AS THE PROXIMATE PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE.

Q. Why should the parties prepare for marriage by the sacrament of penance ?

A. Because the sacrament of marriage requires those, who are about to receive it, to be in the state of grace.*

Q. Can those, who have the misfortune to receive the sacrament of marriage in mortal sin, expect the blessing of heaven on their union ?

A. No ; they render themselves unworthy of it by profaning a sacrament which S. Paul calls **GREAT**, and which Jesus Christ ordained to sanctify the legitimate union which was instituted from the beginning.

Q. Is not the frequent profanation of the sacrament of marriage, one of the principal

* Council. Trid. Sess. xxiv.

causes of the disorders and troubles which dishonor and afflict so many families ?

A. Experience and faith do not allow us to doubt it. How can heaven bless those who present themselves to receive a sacrament of Jesus Christ, with all sinful affections and habits, "and who marry like the heathen, who know not God."*

Q. Is the practice of the Church, which desires her children to prepare for the sacrament of matrimony by confession and communion, wise and salutary ?

A. There can be no doubt of it, in whatever way this important matter is considered. 1. It obliges those who are about to marry, to enter into the recesses of their conscience, with the light of faith before them, on an occasion the most critical, on which their temporal and eternal happiness depends. It is precisely at this epoch of their life, that every thing concurs to blind their judgment and seduce their heart ; the natural levity of youth, the force of passion, the illusions of self-love, the views of ambition and vanity, the allurements of a sensual life, the perfidious advice of false friends, and even,

* Tobias viii.

not unfrequently, the imprudent counsels of parents ; all this and much more tend to bewilder and involve minds the best trained to virtue. 2. The reception of the two sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, procure for them all those graces promised by Christ, whereof at that time they stand so much in need.

Q. What is the first of those graces ?

A. The principles of their religion will point out to them the necessity of learning the will of heaven, before they form a contract which binds them to the end of their life. In other engagements a false step may admit of some alleviation ; with patience, and prudent precaution, a mitigation may be found for the evil, and on a future occasion one profits by the experience already had. But as marriage is indissoluble, there can be no such hope during its continuance ; an unhappy union must of necessity weigh heavily, if one enter the marriage state without the graces necessary to bear up under all its trials, that is, unless the parties prepare themselves for that holy state, by fervent prayer to God, by purifying their consciences from all sin, and receiving our Lord Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

Q. What other advantage is there in this preparation ?

A. The confessor will recall to the minds of those who are about to change their state, the important advice given by the archangel Raphael to the holy youth Tobias, who was about to get married : " Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil hath power. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut God out from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, over them the devil hath power."* Those then about to marry should propose to themselves the will of God and the salvation of their souls as their principal, if not only intention. He will also caution them as to the motives which ought to direct them in the choice they are about to make of a companion, lest they be of the number of those who are heard to curse the day which witnessed their thoughtlessly formed union.

Q. Is it important for Christians to dispose their souls for the reception of the graces attached to the sacrament of matrimony ?

A. Most certainly. How can they, without a special grace of God, fulfil the duties, and sustain

* Tobias vi.

the troubles and temptations that await them in that state ? What solicitude and application of mind are required of them ? What courage and firmness are necessary in a state that is indissoluble, and where the yoke is often very heavy, to live in harmony and edify one another in a truly Christian manner ?

Q. Might a confessor prudently advise those about to be married to make either a general confession, or at least a confession of some years ?

A. Such a confession is frequently necessary : namely, when there is reason to believe that the past confessions have been defective, or sacrilegious. Such confessions should be repaired before receiving the sacrament of matrimony ; otherwise one would bring down a malediction, instead of a blessing, on his marriage. Besides the case just mentioned, a general confession is recommended in all cases where a person is about to change his state of life, either in order to remedy the errors of a past sensual life, or at least to induce persons to enter seriously into themselves, and eradicate from their hearts those perverse and corrupting maxims which too frequently weaken the spirit of faith and the sentiments of Christian piety.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE LAW OF THE CHURCH REGARDING THE ACT PRESCRIBED FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE.

Q. What are the regulations of the Church with respect to the celebration of marriage ?

A. The Church ordains not only that the bans be published before the marriage, as said above, but also that the marriage be performed in presence of the parish priest of one of the parties, or of a person delegated by him, or by the bishop of the diocese ; and two witnesses at least should be present. It is also declared, that where this is wanting, the marriage is null and void, and in the sight of God no marriage at all.

Q. Does this law respecting the presence of the parish priest and of two witnesses, bind in all the dioceses of the United States of North America ?

A. It holds under pain of the marriage being null and void only in those dioceses of the Union where this canon of the Council of Trent is published. But even in those dioceses and places where this canon or decree of the Council has not been published, it is unlawful and sinful to be married by any other but the proper pastor, this being so entirely opposite to the spirit and desire of the Church, and to her repeated prohibition of clandestine marriages.

In places where there is no resident or visiting clergyman, it is lawful for Catholics to appear before the civil officer, and if the parties be in the state of grace, that is, free from mortal sin, and otherwise properly disposed, they receive the grace attached by Christ to the matrimonial union.

But in no case, should the parties, if they be Catholics, appear before the Protestant minister for the celebration of their marriage.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE.

Q. What do you think of the liturgy of the Church, regarding the celebration of marriage?

A. It merits the approval and respect of all prudent men, and of all good Christians.

Q. Why does the Church desire that marriage be celebrated in the house of God?

A. In order to inspire the parties, the parents, the friends, the witnesses, and all present, with sentiments suitable to an action of religion, which exercises so great influence, both in the temporal and spiritual order, on their families, and on the parish to which they belong.

The Church calls the contracting parties to the foot of the altar, in order to impress on their union a more august and sacred character. In the house of God, and under the eyes of the minister of religion, whose blessing they are about to receive, the parties are admonished to

banish from their mind and from their heart, the thoughts and actions unbecoming the dignity and sanctity of the sacrament which they are about to receive. The parents and friends who assist at this holy and moving ceremony, have also a duty to perform. Faith reminds them that they should demean themselves with the decorum and gravity becoming the place in which they are, and the grave act they are about to witness. Their hearts should not be indifferent about the destinies of the couple, on whom the voice of kindred and friendship call aloud to implore with fervor the divine blessing.

Q. What recommendation does the Church give to the spouses, as to the manner of presenting themselves to receive the nuptial benediction ?

A. "She desires," says S. Charles Borromeo, "that they betake themselves to the house of God, with decorum, modesty, and recollection, without pomp or show, and that they endeavor to excel by the splendor of their virtue, and to edify by Christian piety."*

Q. What is the first ceremony in the administration of the sacrament ?

* Councils of S. Ch. Borromeo, Tom. I.

A. The priest begins by receiving the positive expression of the free consent of the spouses ; and then in the name of the Church he says to them : I join you in matrimony in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Q. Why, in certain dioceses, does the bride, if she be not a widow, wear a crown on the head ?

A. "This laudable custom," says S. Chrysostom, "has been introduced as symbolical of the purity and innocence of life which a Christian bride ought to bear with her to her marriage, and as a pledge of the victory she has obtained over her passions."

Q. What is the second ceremony ?

A. It is the benediction of the wedding ring.

Q. What is the meaning of this ceremony ?

A. It reminds the spouses of the close union they contract, of the fidelity they pledge to one another, of the indissoluble bond which unites them together till death rend it asunder ; and the priest by the prayers which he pronounces invokes on them the graces of God, in order that they may have strength and courage to fulfil religiously the duties of their vocation.

Q. Why does the priest invite the parties to join their hands ?

A. This ceremony, which the Scriptures show us to have been observed in the marriage of Tobias with the daughter of Raguel, has for object, says S. Gregory of Nazianzen, to warn the contracting parties that the bridegroom ought first to observe the fidelity which he promises to his bride, and that she owes obedience to him, as according to the words of S. Paul, the husband is the head of the woman.*

Q. What is the third ceremony ?

A. It is the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, offered to God in order to implore his divine mercy in favor of the spouses.†

Q. What remarks may be made on the prayers of the Mass, said for the spouses ?

A. I shall remark, 1. The prayers of the Church for the spouses. 2. The duties of which they are reminded. 3. The models of virtue proposed to them. 4. The great truths which are laid before them on this grave occasion, for their instruction and that of the assistants.

Q. What prayers does the Church offer up for the spouses ?

* 1 Cor. xi. † See at the end, the Mass for the Spouses.

A. In the Introit of the Mass for the spouses these words are read : “ May the God of Israel join you together : and may He, who was merciful to our first parents when alone, be with you.”

Q. What are those duties of which the spouses are reminded ?

A. In the Introit of the same Mass, we read : “ Blessed are they that fear the Lord, and that walk in his ways.”

In the Epistle, we read : “ Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord. Because the husband is the head of the wife : as Christ is the head of the Church. Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it” (to death).

In the Gospel, taken from S. Matthew,* the Church reminds the spouses of the indissolubility of marriage, founded by Jesus Christ on the primitive institution by God : “ What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.”

Q. What virtues does the Church recommend, and what models does she propose to those who are newly married ?

* See the Mass at the end of this book.

A. The virtues and models for the newly married couple are beautifully laid down in the prayers of the Mass for the Bridegroom and Bride.

Q. What great truths does the Church announce on this grave occasion for the instruction of the spouses, and at the same time for those who are present?

A. They will be found in the prayer pronounced by the priest at the nuptial blessing, when, after the *Pater noster*, the priest, standing on the epistle side, turns towards the bridegroom and bride kneeling before him. See the place already cited.

Q. Do the charity and zeal of the Church extend to the spouses even after the celebration of marriage?

A. Yes; the Church, like a tender mother, interests herself for them with fervent solicitude, as may be seen in the last prayer of the Mass. She particularly prays that the fruit of their marriage may be blessed by the reception of the sacrament of regeneration, and by receiving the adoption of the children of God.

Q. What precautions does she give for the

preservation of the child which the mother bears in her womb?

A. She recommends the husband to take every possible care of his spouse during the months of her pregnancy; and she reminds *her* of the great natural obligation she is under of avoiding severe occupations and labors, violent exercises, and every excess that might endanger the fruit of her womb. In such cases she is also dispensed from such fasts as are likely to weaken her health.

Q. Is not the newly born babe a source of joy to the Church, and an object of her most maternal solicitude?

A. Yes; the Church attests her joy in celebrating its spiritual regeneration, and in some places in announcing the same to all the parishioners by the harmony of the Church bells. She strictly forbids that the child be allowed to sleep in the same bed with its nurse, lest accidental death by suffocation ensue, and she exhorts the parents that in the event of their being obliged to put their child out to nurse; they make choice of one whose morals, as well as health, may be pure and unexceptionable.

When the mother, after her confinement, resorts to the temple of the Lord to render the homage of her thanks, and to offer up to God the child he has deigned to bestow on her, the Church receives her with the deepest interest, and offers up new supplications to heaven both for the mother and the child.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF THE BOND OF
MARRIAGE.

Q. What is the Catholic doctrine respecting the marriage bond ?

A. The Catholic Church holds, that by the institution and ordinance of Almighty God, the bond of union that subsists between the married people, can in no case whatsoever be dissolved by any authority on earth, while the parties remain in life : so that though for just causes, and especially for infidelity to the marriage bed, husband and wife may be separated from one another, as to their personal cohabitation ; yet they still continue married people, the bond of marriage subsists in its full force between them, and if either of them should marry another person, they would be guilty of adultery.

Q. How does this indissolubility of marriage appear from Sacred Scripture ?

A. It is manifestly proved from the two Evangelists S. Mark and S. Luke, as also from S. Paul. The disciples having on a certain occasion asked our Saviour respecting the nature of the contract of marriage, He answered them in general and unlimited terms : “ Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her ; and if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”* S. Luke is equally express : “ Every one that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery ; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.”† Here we see none are excepted. The words of Christ, *whosoever, every one*, include all universally. They prove to a demonstration, that however grave the motive may be for the separation, the bond of marriage still continues undissolved, so that neither party can marry during the lifetime of the other, without being guilty of the horrid crime of adultery. S. Augustin thus expresses himself on the words of S. Luke above cited : “ Seeing the Gospel says, whosoever shall do this, that is

* S. Mark x.

† S. Luke xvi.

every one who sends away his wife, and marries another, is guilty of adultery, without doubt, both are included, he, who for any other cause besides fornication, puts away his wife, and he who puts her away on account of fornication.”*

S. Paul declares the indissolubility of marriage in the strongest terms : “The woman that hath a husband, whilst her husband liveth, is bound to the law ; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. Wherefore whilst her husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress, if she be with another man.”† The Apostle here declares in the most express terms, that death alone can dissolve the bond of marriage. And elsewhere he declares this to be an express law of God himself : “ But to them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband ; and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife.”‡ According to the Apostle, when married persons are separated for weighty reasons,

* L. 1. de conj. adult. c. 9. † Rom. ii. ‡ 1 Cor. vii.

they cannot marry again, they must remain so, or be reconciled.

Q. Do not the words of Jesus Christ, in the Gospel according to S. Matthew, insinuate, that on account of the conjugal infidelity of one of the parties, the marriage bond is dissolved, and that at least the innocent party may lawfully marry again? “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that shall marry her, that is put away, committeth adultery.”*

A. These words, taken apart from the whole context, might appear to justify the innocent partner in marrying again on account of the guilt of the other partner. But on examination of the context, and confronting this account of the conversation of Christ with that given by S. Mark, it will be manifest that no argument can be thence deduced against the Catholic doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage; nay the Catholic doctrine is equally proved from this same chapter of S. Matthew, as from the other evangelists, and from S. Paul.

1. The true meaning of this text of S. Mat-

* S. Matt. xix. 9.

thew is to be sought for, from the circumstances in which Christ spoke, and from the question to which it was an answer. The Pharisees asked our Saviour: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" To this question, Christ first replies by saying to them that marriage in its original institution was indissoluble, and consequently could not be broken for any cause. He then declares that by his supreme authority, He restores it to its primitive indissolubility, saying: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* And when the Jews objected the authority of Moses, who permitted them to give a bill of divorce and put away, Christ insisted that that was only a temporary permission, "on account of the hardness of their hearts, but that from the beginning it was not so."† Having made this preamble, He gives a direct answer to the question put to him by the Pharisees. He excepts fornication as a legitimate motive for putting away the guilty partner, though the innocent party cannot marry again during the lifetime of the other. This reasoning appears manifest from the very context; for Christ adds: "He that

* S. Matt. xix.

† Id. xxi.

shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery ;”* namely, because the bond of marriage remains in its full force notwithstanding her being divorced for her crime. The excepting clause, namely, those words of S. Matthew, “except it be for fornication,” have reference to the lawfulness of at all putting away the guilty woman and not to the indissolubility of marriage.

2. Whatever ambiguity there may be in the passage of S. Matthew, it immediately disappears on comparing his account of this matter with that given by S. Mark, chapter the tenth : for both the Evangelists mention the same conversation which Christ had with the Pharisees respecting the nature of the marriage contract. But the words of Christ, as given by S. Mark, are clear, decisive, and without any exception. They expressly affirm that whatever be the cause of the separation of the parties, the bond of marriage remains undissolved. The words of S. Luke are, if possible, still stronger as to the indissolubility of marriage. And S. Paul says, in formal words, that nothing but death can break the bond of marriage, and if the parties separate,

* S. Matthew xix.

they must *remain unmarried, or be reconciled*. The true meaning of the words of S. Matthew, should they contain any obscurity, must be ascertained by the clear and express texts of the other Evangelists, and of S. Paul: for the Scripture cannot contradict itself.

8. It appears also from the astonishment expressed by the disciples immediately after the contested words of S. Matthew, that they were far from considering the condition of the husband as favored by their divine Master, in case of the infidelity of the wife: for "his disciples say unto him; if the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry."* They clearly show, by their replying thus, that the husband, though innocent, could not marry after putting away his wife.

Q. Has the Catholic Church ever made a public declaration of her doctrine on this point?

A. Yes; in the General Council of Trent it declares, "that if any one shall say that the Church is mistaken in having taught and in teaching, according to the Evangelical and Apostolical doctrine, that the bond of marriage

* S. Matthew xix.

cannot be dissolved by the adultery of either of the parties, and that both, or even the innocent party, who gives no cause to the adultery, cannot contract another marriage whilst the other party is alive, let him be anathema.”*

* Sess. c. 7.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE ADVANTAGES OF MARRIAGE.

Q. What are the blessings and the advantages of marriage?

A. They may be said to be principally three.

1. Marriage offers to the spouses the spiritual blessings by which they are enabled to assist and encourage one another in fulfilling their respective obligations, in sustaining the troubles of life and surmounting temptations.

2. They mutually help one another in their various necessities, occupations and sicknesses.

3. They are blessed, when such is the will of God, with children, inheritors not only of their name and temporal goods, but much more, who may be with themselves one day heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Q. Have not the just in every age of the world considered a numerous family as a great

blessing from God, and even prayed for the same?

A. Yes; the ancient patriarchs blessed the Lord for their numerous offspring, because thus the number of the adorers of the One True God was multiplied.

Eve, on the birth of her first child, exclaimed: "I have gotten a child through God:!"* and the Prophet says: "The inheritance of the Lord are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb."† When the Jews had no children they supplicated the Lord with tears and frequently he granted their petition. Thus Anna obtained Samuel, whom she vowed to the Lord, and besides him four other children.

The piety of Zachary and Elizabeth obtained for them a child, destined to be the precursor of the Lord. Under the law of grace, Christians, animated by the spirit of faith, and convinced of the eminent destiny of man regenerated in Jesus Christ, have ever considered a numerous family as a special blessing of God. And they would have looked with horror on the base calculations of ambition, cupidity, and other human considerations, which make some

* Gen. iv. † Ps. cxxvi.

fear and repine at the increase in their families. But how execrable would not the conduct of those be, who should seek, in opposition to the holy will of God, to limit the number of their children ! Hence the Lord "slew Onan because he did a detestable thing."* Such would be a blasphemy in action against the Creator. S. Jerom tells us "that the Eternal Father looks with indignation on those married persons who confide not in him."

* Gen. xxxviii. 10

CHAPTER XXV.

OF THE DEPLORABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THOSE
MARRIAGES WHERE THE FEAR OF GOD DOES
NOT REIGN.

Q. May we not attribute a great portion of the crimes and calamities which befall families and society to the total absence of a religious spirit in entering on the state of marriage ?

A. There can be no doubt of it, for the whole system of society rests upon the marriages that are formed, as on its foundation. The same truth was recognized by the great Latin poet, in the days of paganism : “ If our age be fertile in every disorder and vice, it is because corruption reigns in the nuptial union, in families : and from this source flow all the disorders that inundate whole nations.”*

Q. Is it, then, a great misfortune to marry

* Horace de carm. lib. iii. 6.

into a family void of the fear of God, where religion, solid virtue, and sincere piety are disregarded?

A. Undoubtedly it is. We read in the sacred Scriptures, that the greatest chastisement inflicted on the human family is expressly attributed to the irreligious marriages which were formed by the people of God with the impious descendants of Cain. Hence, in punishment of their disorders, the Almighty resolved to exterminate all living creatures from the face of the earth, by a universal deluge.*

* Gen. vi.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF THE DUTIES OF MARRIED PERSONS TOWARDS
ONE ANOTHER.

Q. What are the duties of married persons towards one another ?

A. There are some which regard both parties equally, and others which are peculiar to each.

Q. What are those which equally concern both ?

A. Five especially.

Q. Which is the first ?

A. The first, to contribute to the mutual happiness of one another by a Christian and edifying life. S. Paul lays down the manner of life of married persons, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter the seventh, and in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter the fifth.

Q. How should they edify one another and regulate their days ?

A. The most enlightened and zealous directors of a spiritual life advise them to pray to God every day, their family being all assembled together, to read some spiritual book for general edification every day during half an hour, to frequent the holy sacraments often during the year, to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass on week days, when compatible with their domestic duties, and to be most punctual in assisting at Mass and other pious exercises on Sundays and Holy days, and thus to walk in the presence of God during their mortal career.

Q. Would a married person be justified in employing his time in devotional exercises, to the prejudice of family concerns ?

A. Most certainly not ; for the duties to God and those to one's family are both to be faithfully complied with. But, at the same time, it should be remembered that Christ intimates to all, there is "but one thing necessary,"* which is the salvation of the soul ; and He teaches us "to seek first the kingdom of God and his justice,"† that is, to cultivate those virtues which may conduct us to that heavenly kingdom. The married, then, should beware of the false

* Luke x.

† Matth. vi.

maxims of the world, and never dispense themselves from due attention to the exercises of Christian piety.

Q. Is it difficult to unite the practices of a Christian life with the embarrassments and occupations of the married state ?

A. No, replies S. Chrysostom, for were such the case, God would not have wished men to marry, nor would He have instituted marriage. He adds, that the greater number of just, in the Old Law, were heads of families : and in the New Law, innumerable saints of both sexes honored the married state, and sanctified themselves therein.

Q. What is the second duty of married persons towards one another ?

A. They should cherish for one another, sincere and tender, but at the same time chaste love, worthy of a soul made to the likeness of God. Their hearts, as well as their senses, should be inaccessible to anything which would degrade souls and bodies consecrated to God in baptism, sanctified by the participation of the most adorable Eucharist, and destined to be associated in heaven, in glory with the eternal God.

Q. What is the third duty of married persons ?

A. To observe an inviolable fidelity to each other till death.

Q. Does prudence suggest any rules to Christian wives by which they may maintain the fidelity they have plighted ?

A. Yes ; 1. They should carefully shun all books contrary to good morals. 2. They should not allow themselves to indulge an excessive love of society. 3. They should check all fondness for dress and vanity, and still more they should shun all fashions contrary to Christian modesty.

Q. What is the fourth duty of married persons ?

A. To live in the most perfect peace and harmony.

Q. What is the fifth ?

A. To practise mutual and Christian forbearance with each other's faults and manners ; according to the exhortation of S. Paul : " Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience, bearing with one another,

forgiving one another, even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also.”*

Q. What are the particular duties of the husband towards the wife ?

A. To show her kindness, and afford her protection and a maintenance suitable to his state and means ; he ought to aid her with his advice, and undertake her defence.

Q. What are the particular duties of the wife ?

A. Obedience, equality of temper, and amiability of manner. S. Paul requires that the wife honor and obey her husband, and love him with a respectful and becoming love. She should bear with his faults in silence, dissemble them, and endeavor to correct them with great mildness, lead him to God with sweetness of manner and good example ; she should discharge the minuter matters of domestic economy, leaving him more time for the more important matters ; and both of them should unceasingly pray to God for each other and for their family, that they may be all united with God in eternal and unchangeable bliss.

* Colos. iii.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OF THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS
THEIR CHILDREN.

Q. Ought not the wife to take special precautions at the time of her pregnancy ?

A. Yes ; nature and religion require her to avoid in her work, in her amusements, in her recreations, and in her food, everything that might prove injurious.

Q. Should the Christian mother, on that important occasion, have recourse to God, in order to draw down the blessing of Heaven on herself and on her child ?

A. Yes, according to the example of the mothers of S. Gregory Nazianzen and S. Augustin. And as the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to S. Elizabeth caused the sanctification of S. John the Baptist while still in his mother's womb, what abundant graces may not those mothers expect, who during the time of preg-

nancy frequently receive Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Communion ?

Q. Should fathers and mothers hasten to have their newly born children baptized ?

A. Yes, on account of the numberless accidents to which tender infants are exposed, whereby they may die without that first and most essential Sacrament : for Heaven is closed against those who have not received it.

Many Councils reprobate in the strongest language the conduct of those parents, who in order to have greater ceremony and pomp, or under the pretext of waiting for the sponsors, risk the eternal salvation of their children.

If there be any danger of death, the child should be baptized privately, and always by one who is well acquainted with the manner of administering this Sacrament.

Q. Can a parent baptize his own child ?

A. No, unless no one else be at hand.

Q. Why insist so forcibly on the speedy baptism of infants ?

A. In order to remedy the grievous abuses that have crept in among us, of deferring for weeks, and even months, this most necessary means of salvation.

Q. Should a mother nurse her own children ?

A. It is conformable to both nature and religion, though there are cases which admit of exceptions.

Q. What do the Holy Fathers teach respecting this point ?

A. S. Gregory the Great, S. Ambrose, S. John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, and in later ages, Benedict XIV., strongly urge this matter on Christian mothers, as a duty which ought be with them most sweet, agreeable and sacred. They propose to them the examples of the holy mothers mentioned in Sacred Writ : namely of Rebecca, Sara, Anna the mother of Samuel, and of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ.

Q. Does the Church make any regulations respecting the infant's sleeping in the same bed with its mother, or nurse ?

A. It is strongly prohibited by several Pontiffs and Councils ; and in the Penitential Canons severe penances are inflicted in the cases where the infants should happen to be smothered by such imprudence.

Q. Should parents love all their children equally ?

A. The voice of nature and religion admonishes them of this duty. The Sacred Scriptures makes mention of the deadly jealousy and hatred conceived by the brethren of Joseph against him, as an instance of the fatal consequences of the predilection of parents for any one of their children: "And his brethren seeing that he was loved by his father more than all his sons, hated him."* They even formed the design of putting him to death, which was changed into that of selling him as a slave.

Q. Is it not an obligation on the part of parents, and especially of the mother, who is always with her children, to inspire them with the love of God and of their Saviour Jesus Christ; to speak to them familiarly of the goodness of God, of his mercy, of his death on a cross, and particularly of his desire that little children be allowed to come to him?

A. Yes; it is the first duty of parents, and for that reason God gave them those children, in order that by knowing and loving Him here on earth they might be happy with him forever in heaven. Christ tells us how pleasing the

* Gen. xxxvii.

simple prayers of children are to His Father :
“ Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings
Thou hast perfected praise.”*

The Scriptures present many instances of the great solicitude of the just in every age towards their tender offspring ; that of the holy Patriarch Tobias especially, who carefully taught his son to fear God and shun every sin.”†

The Wise Man, in the book of Proverbs, informs us of the zeal of David in regard to his child Solomon.‡ The firmness with which good principles early instilled, remain impressed on the mind, is such that with difficulty are they ever effaced. The Spirit of God assures us : “ A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”§ Parents then should impress their children from their earliest infancy with sentiments of tender love for God, of horror for sin ; they should also teach them to make the sign of the cross, to pronounce the sweet names of Jesus and Mary, and to say their prayers at stated times.

The first impressions are in a manner indelible ; it is the most important duty of parents to make them of a salutary kind ; yet it is most

* Math. xxi. † Tob. i. ‡ Prov. iv. § Id. xxii.

wofully neglected. Yet what should be more consoling to a parent than to become the first Apostle in his own family? The words of the pious Queen Blanche of France to her child: "My son, I would sooner see you dead at my feet, than to know of your ever offending the Almighty by any mortal sin," had such an effect on him, that it is related of him, that although he was a great king, a great warrior, and a law-giver, he never committed a single mortal sin. Such was S. Louis IX. King of France.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE EDUCATION WHICH
PARENTS OUGHT TO GIVE THEIR
CHILDREN.

Q. What ought to be the foundation of a Christian education ?

A. The love and fear of God. Such was the last advice which Tobias gave his son and daughter-in-law : "Hearken, therefore, my children, to your father ; serve the Lord in truth, and seek to do the things that please him : and command your children that they do justice and alms-deeds, and that they be mindful of God, and bless him at all times, in truth, and with all their power."*

If the chaste Susanna has become a model of virtue, and if her name be still so cherished among the faithful, it is because her "father and mother were just, and because they, from an early

* Tob. xiv.

period, inspired her with the fear of God," by their wise lessons and virtuous examples.

It is also by impressing deeply on the minds of his sons the fear of God and the love of his holy law, that Matthathias, the head of the illustrious family of the Machabees, prepared them to devote themselves with such heroical courage to the defence of the true religion against the impious kings of Syria. In his last words he thus addresses them: "Now therefore, my sons, be ye zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. And call to remembrance the works of the fathers, and you shall receive great glory and everlasting name. . . . Consider through all generations, that none that trust in God, fail in strength."*

And to these examples I shall add that of the "ever to be admired mother," as the Scripture says, of the Machabees, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her seven sons slain in one day, and bore it with good courage, for the hope that she had in God. "And she bravely exhorted every one of them, and said to them: I know not how

you were formed in my womb, for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of you. But the Creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, He will restore to you again in His mercy, both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of his laws."* And to her youngest son : "My son, said she, have pity upon me, that bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them ; and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also : So thou shalt not fear the tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren."†

Q. Is it a great misfortune to have bad children ?

A. It is the greatest of all : "Rejoice not," says the Holy Ghost, "in ungodly children : neither be delighted in them, if the fear of God be not with them. Trust not to their life, and respect not their labors. For better is one that

* Mach. vii. † Id.

feareth God, than a thousand ungodly children. And it is better to die without children, than to have ungodly children.”*

Q. What are the principal faults of parents in the education of their children ?

A. Chiefly those which I shall specify.

Q. Which is the first ?

A. The first is, that the parents have a blind love for their children ; their affection for them is quite human and earthly, and not according to God and reason ; they are blind to their faults, and have not courage to correct and punish them when necessary.

Q. Which is the second fault ?

A. Parents, instead of studying to make good and solid Christians of their children, direct all their efforts to make them popular and amiable, according to the maxims of the world, which are seldom in accordance with the principles and duties of religion. The world seeks alone to save appearances, and to shun the blame and censure of men, whereas the true Christian dreads, of all things, the eye of Him who searches into the inmost recesses of the soul. A sad experience teaches us that it is

* Eccl. xvi.

not sufficient to inspire youth with principles of worldly honor, or to inculcate the maxims and usages of society. Virtue that rests on such a foundation, cannot long hold its ground.

Q. What is the third ?

A. They too frequently implant in their tender minds a love of the world ; they familiarize them with its false maxims ; they give them altogether false notions of the good they ought to seek after, and of the evils they ought to avoid.

“ It would appear,” says S. Chrysostom, addressing parents, “ that you designedly procure the destruction of your children, by instilling into their minds those ideas that are in direct opposition to their eternal welfare. The Gospel tells us : ‘ *Wo to them who live in delights !*’ and you think only of procuring pleasures for them ; *Wo to you rich !* and you think alone of enriching them ; Wo to those whom the world praises ! and you lavish your worldly substance to decorate them and to gain them applause. It is most insupportable to see you not only teach your children maxims contrary to those of Jesus Christ, but even to style them

virtues. Luxury and opulence you call generosity. Worldly glory you call greatness of mind. Pride and arrogance pass for nobleness of mind; prodigality is liberality, violence and injustice is courage and firmness. And as if this were not sufficient to lead astray your unhappy children, you designate with ignoble epithets the most solid virtues of Christianity. Modesty is styled clownishness, patience is cowardice, contempt of show and vain-glory is baseness of mind. You seem to fear lest your children should receive from a charitable neighbor a seasonable correction for their defects and vices.”*

Q. What is the fourth fault ?

A. That they are solely solicitous to obtain for their children a temporal inheritance, leaving aside the consideration of a future life, as if it were a chimera. The richest patrimony parents can leave their children, says S. Charles Borromeo, is to make them good Christians. Virtue is incontestably more precious than all the treasures of the earth.†

Q. Which is the fifth ?

A. The preference they make of the quali-

* Tom. i. p. 86. † Prov. Conc. Tom. i.

ties of the body above those of the soul. How many parents are anxious to improve the manners of their children, their style of walking, of dancing, and so forth, but try not to infuse into them the virtues of patience, modesty, humility and love of God! And how many other parents leave their children to associate with whom they please!

Q. What is the sixth?

A. It is the exposing of their children to the danger of aspiring to a condition of life beyond the disposition of Providence, both by the education they give them and by the associations they form.

Q. What is the seventh fault?

A. The want of discernment in the choice of proper persons to form the minds of their children. Most parents think that they have fulfilled their duty by teaching their children reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, and so forth. They do not pay any attention to the choice of persons whom they employ for that purpose. Provided they can improve them in the various branches of study, they forget that the first and greatest point is, to see that their children be instructed in the truths of

faith and the principles of morality. They should be thoroughly convinced that both the instructors of their children and their school-mates and playmates are persons of well tried virtue and pure lives.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED BY PARENTS IN ORDER TO SECURE TO THEIR CHILDREN A TRUE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Q. What are the means indispensably necessary to give a Christian education to children?

A. They may be reduced to four : instruction, watchfulness, correction and good example.

OF THE DUTY OF INSTRUCTION.

Q. Is the obligation of instructing their children required of parents in any express and formal manner in the Sacred Scriptures?

A. It is frequently recommended by the sacred writers.

Almighty God praises the fidelity of his servant Abraham in this regard ; "I know that he will command his children, and his house-

hold after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice.”*

God prescribed certain laws to Moses, whereby the people in succeeding generations might retain a constant memory of his divine benefits towards them. Hence Moses so often reminds all parents of the duty of impressing on the minds of their children the stupendous works He wrought in favor of their forefathers. “And the Lord said to Moses : Go, that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy sons and of thy grandsons, how often I have plagued the Egyptians, and wrought my signs amongst them, and know that I am the Lord.”†

“And when thy son shall ask thee to-morrow saying : what mean these testimonies and ceremonies ? Thou shalt say to him : The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand, and commanded that we should do all these ordinances, and we should fear the Lord our God, that it might be well with us.”‡

Similar admonitions are given by God through his servant Moses, as are to be seen in the book of Exodus, chapters xii. and xiii.

Josue also erected twelve huge stones,

* Gen. xviii. † Exodus c. x. ‡ Deuteronomy c. ix.

on which the names of the twelve tribes were inscribed, in order to perpetuate the memory of the miraculous passage of the people over the Jordan : " And Josue said to the people of Israel : when your children shall ask their fathers to-morrow : what mean these stones ? You shall teach them, and say : Israel passed over this Jordan, through the dry channel ; The Lord your God drying up the waters in your sight until you passed over ; as He had done before in the Red Sea, which He dried up till we passed ; that all the people of the earth may learn the mighty hand of the Lord, that you also may fear the Lord your God forever."†

And the Royal Prophet informs us that God ordained parental instruction as the means of perpetuating amongst the generations of men the knowledge of his works and of his law : " And the Lord made a law in Israel, and commanded our fathers, that they should make the same known to their children, that another generation might know them : The children that should be born and should rise up and declare them to their children. That they may put their

* Josue iv.

hope in God, and may not forget the works of God ; and may seek his commandments.”*

Q. What means ought parents to adopt in order to procure religious instruction for their children ?

A. The first and principal one is to send their children to the parish church, because the ordinary means ordained by Providence for perpetuating the divine Law is through the instruction of the pastors of his church.

The second means is to establish in the bosom of their families, the laudable custom of having a chapter of the catechism and a part of some book of piety read every day, and to question the children on the chapter of the catechism given as a task.

Q. Can parents in conscience send their children to Protestant schools, or masters ?

A. It is evident they cannot do so without exposing their children to great danger ; and where there are other schools, it cannot be practised without sin.

Q. What are the inconveniences that result from such schools, and such teachers ?

* Ps. lxxvii.

A. They are very many, and such as produce the worst imaginable effects. The influence throughout this Union is known to be of a sectarian character. It is morally impossible for the faith of youth not to be weakened by the false propositions occasionally put forward, by the mockery of Catholic practices and points of faith, and by the pernicious books used in those schools. In addition to what has been said, in such schools and under such teachers, children see nothing and practice nothing calculated to lead them to Christian piety. Their ideas and their associations become quite uncatholic. Such children cannot be said to be either Protestants or Catholics.

Q. At what age are children bound to make acts of faith, hope, and charity?

A. As soon as they arrive at the age of reason, which is generally about the age of seven years.

Q. What would become of children, who should die after arriving at the age of reason without having made acts of faith, hope, and charity?

A. They would be eternally excluded from the kingdom of heaven. Great then is the obligation of parents to instruct their children,

and according to S. Paul, their servants also :
“ If any man have not a care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”*

OF THE VIGILANCE REQUIRED OF PARENTS
TOWARDS CHILDREN.

Q. Is it of importance that parents should watch over their children ?

A. It is of the highest importance, especially in an age in which faith and morals are exposed to such violent and frequent temptations. For, as the Lord once complained, so we also may say : “ The earth is corrupted before God, and is filled with iniquity.”†

Q. Is this vigilance more necessary in countries where children are constantly in contact with sectaries ?

A. Yes ; for the discourses of the enemies of the faith are, as S. Paul assures us, injurious : “ their speech spreadeth like a cancer, they have subverted the faith of some.” ‡

Q. Towards what ought this vigilance be directed in particular ?

A. The parent's eye should ever be directed

* 1 Tim. v. † Gen. vi. ‡ 2 Tim. ii.

towards their children from rising in the morning till their going to bed at night. They should see that they observe all the rules of holy modesty, that they say their prayers with devotion. They should see how they employ their time, their recreations; what are their amusements, who are their companions, what friendships they form, what books they read, whether they attend to Catechism, hear Mass, go to confession, and whether they keep the fasts and abstinences of the Church; finally, they should take care that they keep within doors at night, and that they frequent not houses of dissipation, and if allowed to go out at night, it should be in company of one of the parents, or of an aged person, on whose virtue every reliance could be placed.

Q. To what danger do parents expose themselves, who do not watch over their children, but allow them much liberty?

A. The Spirit of God says: "A horse not broken becomes stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices."

And again the same Holy Spirit admonishes

parents : "The father watcheth over his daughter when no one thinketh, and the care for her taketh away his sleep . . . lest she should be corrupted . . . and make him become a laughing-stock to his enemies."*

Q. Do the Scriptures offer any examples of the sad consequences of neglecting to watch over children ?

A. Yes ; that of Dina, daughter of the Patriarch Jacob, who, imprudently looking on with the women of the country, which was an act of mere curiosity, became the victim of a violent passion, and lost her virtue. Her misfortune ultimately led to the most bloody carnage.

Again, we have in the wicked lives of Ophni and Phinees, sons of the High-priest Heli, a frightful example of the consequence of neglecting to correct children in youth. The Lord intimates to Samuel, in these words, the punishment he was about to inflict on Heli and his entire family : "I will raise up against Heli all the things I have spoken concerning his house. . . . For I have foretold unto him, that I will judge his house forever, for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and he did not chas-

* Eccl. xlii. 9, 10, 11.

tise them. Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated . . . forever."* In a short time the words of God were fulfilled. And this punishment inflicted on Heli and his family, is the more to be dreaded by parents, that Heli was of the most unblemished character, except that he neglected to correct his two sons.

OF CORRECTION.

Q. Is there any obligation on the part of parents to correct their children?

A. Yes; because all the children of Adam are prone to evil, the sacred Scripture assuring us that "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth;"† and they will certainly follow their bent, if not curbed. A gentle admonition, a slight correction, would have checked a fault, which afterwards became irremediable, and a source of incalculable misery to both parents and child. An evil habit once contracted, becomes a second nature, which it is almost impossible to correct.

Q. How many kinds of correction are there?

A. Two, the moral correction, which is ad-

* 1 Kings, c. 3. † Gen. viii.]

dressed to the mind and heart ; the physical, or the corporal correction, which is inflicted on the body.

Q. Which should parents principally employ ?

A. Without doubt the moral correction, which conciliates the confidence of children, gains the heart, and acts on the conscience.

Q. What rules should they follow in correcting their children ?

A. Their correction should be proportioned to the age, to the faults, the judgment and humor of their children.

Q. In what manner must correction be given, in order to be profitable ?

A. There is nothing in which prudence and good sense are more necessary, than in the correction of children. I shall propose certain advice on this important head.

1. Never to correct children while you are in a passion : but to compose the mind as much as possible, that the correction may be an act of reason and duty, and not of passion.

2. To recommend the matter earnestly to God, that He may assist you, and give His blessing to the correction.

3. To proportion the correction to the fault. Mere childish faults, where there is no malice, are to be overlooked : and when they ingenuously confess their fault, and promise amendment, correction may be moderated, or even passed over entirely, if it be the first time.

Q. To what faults ought correction be applied ?

A. Parents ought to correct their children particularly,

1. In all cases of telling lies. If children find that the telling of lies succeeds with them, in a short time they will contract an inveterate habit of lying.

2. In all cases of stealing, disobedience, disrespect to parents, swearing, cursing, immodesty in words or actions, and also in all cases of neglect of their prayers and of other religious duties.

Q. Is corporal punishment to be resorted to with children ?

A. The Spirit of God declares that : "He who spareth the rod, hateth his son ; but he that loveth him, correcteth him betimes."* Again : "withhold not correction from a child : for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not

* Prov. xiii.

die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from hell.”* And again: “He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end.”†

Nothing shows more clearly the necessity of severe punishment towards children than the history of Heli, the high priest. He was old and infirm, his two sons officiated for him in the Temple. They were bad men, did much evil, and greatly scandalized the people. All this came to the father's ears: he called them, and gave them a gentle reproof in these words: “Why do you these things which I hear, very wicked things? Do not so, my sons, for it is no good report I hear.”‡ He went no further, nor did he use his authority to correct them, and put a stop to the disorders. God, by his prophet, upbraided him for his neglect, and denounced the severest chastisements on him and his family, particularly that sudden death would befall his sons. And, shortly after, all that God predicted was literally fulfilled. §

Q. What excuse do persons bring for themselves who imitate Heli, in neglecting to correct their children?

* Prov. xxiii. † Eccl. xxx. ‡ 1 Kings, ii. § Id.

A. They generally bring one or other of these two excuses :

1. That they cannot bear to punish their children, or hear them cry, or see them suffer : but such excuses only show how little regard such parents have for the salvation of their children. They expose them to eternal misery hereafter, rather than afflict them for a moment by wholesome correction, according to the Spirit of God : "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell."*

Heli, like such parents, would not correct his sons, for fear of displeasing them ; but, what a deluge of evils did this afterwards bring upon him and them, and upon his whole posterity † All this would have been prevented, had he corrected them as he ought to have done.

David also, when his eldest son Ammon committed a wicked crime, neglected to punish the scandalous youth, as he merited ; for the Scripture says : "He would not afflict the spirit of his son Ammon, for he loved him, because he was his first born."‡ But who can express the many calamities, such as rebellions, mur-

* Prov. xxiii. † 1 Kings, iii. ‡ 2 Kings, xiii.

ders, fratricide, which David had to witness in his own family, on account of this imprudent parental indulgence ?

2. Other parents excuse themselves on the plea : he is yet but a child, he knows no better ; things must be overlooked in a child ; when older he will acquire more sense and amend. It is true, there are things which must be overlooked in children, but what are they ? Such things as are entirely childish, and do not show any malice. It would be a great folly in parents to be always chiding and correcting their children for such faults, or failings. But if the faults be immoral, or show any vicious disposition of the heart, such as lying, immodesty, disobedience, stubbornness, cursing, stealing, it is certainly the greatest cruelty in parents to overlook such things in their children, and to let them pass uncorrected ; and it is a pernicious mistake to think that such dispositions will cease when their children arrive at mature age.

Q. Does S. Paul give parents any advice as to the manner of inflicting punishment on their children ?

A. He tells them to avoid harshness and excessive severity : “ And you fathers, provoke

not your children to indignation, lest they be discouraged, but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord.”*

Q. Is it a mark of affection to correct one's child ?

A. Most certainly, if it be done through affection and in the Spirit of God, as S. Paul says in the above text ; and again, the same Apostle says : “ Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”†

OF GOOD EXAMPLE.

Q. Should not parents give their children good example, as a pastor to his flock ?

A. Yes ; because parents may be considered the domestic pastors of their family. To them may be applied the exhortations addressed by S. Paul to Timothy and Titus : “ Be thou an example to the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity.”‡ And again : “ In all things show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity.”§

* Eph. vi. 4, and Col. iii. 21. † Hebr. xii. 6.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. § 2 Tit. ii.

Q. Why is the example of parents so important ?

A. Because children are naturally inclined to imitate and copy their parents especially, whom they respect and love. "Example is more eloquent," S. Leo says, "than precepts ; works teach more efficaciously than words."*

Q. What motive did the illustrious head of the family of the Machabees employ, in order to encourage his sons in the observance and defence of the law of God ?

A. "Call to remembrance," said the venerable Mathathias, "the works of the fathers, which they have done in their generations, and you shall receive great glory, and an everlasting name."†

Q. What means did the Almighty adopt in order to call men to the practice of virtue ?

A. He sent his own Divine Son on earth, who first instructed the people by example ; "Jesus began to do, and to teach."‡ And again, "I have given you an example, that as I have done, so do you also."§ Again : "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all

* Sermon on fasting. † 1 Mach. ii. ‡ Acts of the Apost. c. 1.
§ S. John xiii.

men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world.”*

Q. Is bad example a great crime in parents ?

A. Of parents who give bad examples it may be said, with the royal prophet, that they immolate their children to demons.†

S. Bernard calls them murderers of their children, and S. Thomas says of such, “ that they force their children into sin.”

Q. What was the reply of the just and noble minded Eleazar, when persons without principle proposed to him to feign that he had eaten of the unlawful meats, and thereby save his life ?

A. It was expressive of his fears, lest he should do anything that would give bad example to youth: “ It doth not become our age said he: to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was gone over to the life of the heathens: and so they, through my dissimulation, and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse on my old

* Tit. ii. † Ps. cv.

age. For though for the present I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet I should not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead. Wherefore by departing manfully out of this life, I shall show myself worthy of my old age : and I shall leave an example of fortitude to young men, if with a ready mind and constancy, I suffer an honorable death, for the most venerable and most holy laws. And having spoken thus, he was forthwith carried to execution. And they that led him, and had been a little before more mild, were changed to wrath for the words he had spoken, which they thought were spoken out of arrogancy. But when he was now ready to die with stripes, he groaned, and said : O Lord who hast the holy knowledge, thou knowest manifestly, that whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in body ; but in soul I am well content to suffer these things, because I fear thee. Thus did this man die, leaving not only to young men, but also to the whole nation, the memory of his death, for an example of virtue and fortitude.”*

* 2 Mach: vi.

Q. What has Jesus Christ said of those who give bad examples to young persons ?

A. "He that shall scandalize," says the Saviour, "one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. . . See that you despise not one of these little ones : for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."*

**OF THE DUTY OF PARENTS TO PRAY FOR
THEIR CHILDREN.**

Q. Are parents strictly obliged to pray for their children ?

A. This is the most important duty of the whole, because the rest will avail little or nothing without it. Though parents be ever so exact in the above duties for the training of their children, yet if the blessing of God do not accompany their endeavors, all will be to no purpose. Paul may plant, and Apollo may water, but it is God that gives the increase. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."† Hence the principal care

* Matt. xviii. 6, 10. † Ps. cxxvi.

of parents must be to draw down the blessing of God upon their children, by fervent and persevering prayer, and the frequent reception of the holy sacraments.

Q. Does the Scripture afford any examples of this?

A. As soon as the Blessed Virgin Mary was allowed to enter the Temple, she presented her divine Son Jesus to His Eternal Father. And Job, rising early, offered up sacrifices and holocausts to God, for every one of his children, lest they should have sinned and offended God. These examples are recorded for the imitation of parents.

Q. What consequences flow from what is said above with regard to parents themselves?

A. Parents, especially, ought to be good Christians: 1. Because their charge is very great, and very difficult, and their own salvation, as well as that of their children, depends upon their performing them well; consequently they stand in great need of help from God; which they cannot expect, if they live not in his friendship. 2. It is impossible for them to discharge some of the above duties without being good Christians. 3. The virtue and hap-

pineness of children depend in a great degree on the piety and virtue of the parents. "The just man that walketh in his simplicity, shall leave behind him blessed children."* But "the children of sinners become children of abominations; . . . the inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish, and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach."†

Q. What sins should parents particularly avoid ?

A. All things contrary to the above duties, but especially these following : 1. The instilling into their tender minds, of worldly maxims and sentiments of pride, vanity, love of fine dress, revenge, and the like. 2. Bringing up their children in a false religion, or exposing them in any way to the danger of losing their religion, or of not practising it. The conduct of such parents is worse than that of Herod, who only murdered the bodies of the holy Innocents, whilst these destroy their children's souls. 3. Using unjust means to procure riches for them; for this never fails, sooner or later, to bring the curse of God upon themselves, and upon their children, according to the prophecy of Zach-

* Prov. xx. 7. † Eccl. xli.

arias: "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth, for every thief shall be judged, as it is written. . . . And I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of Hosts, and it shall come to the house of the thief . . . and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and it shall consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof."*

* Zach. v.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR
PARENTS.

Q. On what is founded the obligation of children to honor their parents?

A. It is founded on duty, gratitude, and interest. 1. On duty, arising from the express command of the Almighty, besides the light of nature, which strongly dictates this duty to all men. Hence we find that all the servants of God always honored their parents, in obedience to this command.

2. On gratitude, arising from what they have done and suffered for us. Now to them, under God, we owe our very being, and at our birth we are helpless and miserable, more so than any other living creature; hence to them we owe our food, raiment, care and education. And what have they not suffered on our account? Can we ever repay them for all we owe

to them ? It is a strict duty of gratitude and of justice, to do so as far as in our power, when they are in necessity. 3. It is founded on interest, which arises from the divine promises of temporal and spiritual blessings, annexed to the faithful discharge of this duty. Thus : “ My son, hear the instruction of thy father ; and forsake not the law of thy mother : that grace may be added to thy head.”* “ Children, hear the judgment of your father, and so do that you may be saved. . . He who honoreth his mother, is as one who layeth up a treasure. . . In the day of his prayer he shall be heard.”† And again, terrible are the threats held out by God against those children who dishonor their parents : “ Cursed be he who honoreth not his father and mother ; and all the people shall say Amen.”‡

Q. Wherein does this honor consist ?

A. It consists in four things, love, respect, obedience and assistance.

Q. What should be the love of children towards their parents ?

A. They should love them with sincerity and affection. This sincerity is shown both by

* Prov. i. † Eccles. iii. ‡ Deut. xxvii.

words and actions: praying for them, doing them every service they can, and studying to the utmost to make their life happy, by a dutiful, affectionate and respectful behaviour towards them, especially in time of sickness, want and old age.

Q. Is it a grievous sin in children to do any thing contrary to this love which they owe their parents?

A. Reason and religion equally condemn all thoughts, words and actions contrary to parental love. If it be highly sinful to wish ill to any neighbor, to hate even an enemy, how much more so is it to hate one's parent? 2. To show this outwardly by bad wishes, by cursing them, is a mortal sin of the deepest dye: "He that curseth his father or mother, shall die the death."* 3. If children proceed to striking their parents, it is still more heinous: "He that striketh his father or mother, shall be put to death."† 4. To speak to them in a passionate, hasty, harsh manner, to give them ill language, short answers, contradicting them, vexing them with undutiful behaviour, is also a direct transgression of this commandment: "He is cursed of

* Exod. xxi. † Id. ‡ Eccl. iii.

God, that angereth his mother.”† “He that afflicteth his father, and that chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy.”*

Q. In what manner are children to show respect to their parents ?

A. They must have inwardly in their hearts great reverence towards them, and by no means despise them, whatever weaknesses they may have. “Let every one fear his father and his mother : I am the Lord.”† “Curseth be he that honoreth not his father and his mother.”‡
 2. They should honor their parents in their words and outward behaviour, paying them all deference on all occasions, and yielding to their opinions. Hence, to call one’s parents bad names, to mock them, to upbraid them wantonly for their defects, is a grievous sin ; “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth the labor of his mother, let the ravens of the brook pick it out.”§ Cham, the son of Noe, for laughing at his father, brought a most dreadful curse upon a great part of his posterity.|| Above all things, children must never expose the defects of their parents, but rather they should do all

* Prov. xix. † Levit. xix. ‡ Deut. xxi. § Prov. xxx.

|| Gen. ix.

they can to hide them from the eyes of the world ! “ Glory not in the dishonor of thy father ; for his shame is no glory to thee.”* 4. While under their parents’ care, they ought to consult with them in all their undertakings, and do nothing of moment without their advice and concurrence. And this is particularly to be observed when children are thinking about settling in the world, and entering into the married state.

OF OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.

Q. Does the Almighty strictly require this duty of children ?

A. Most certainly he does : Thus S. Paul says : “ Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise.”† Again : “ Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.”‡ The same Apostle, in the second Epistle to Timothy, reckons disobedience to parents among those sins of the heathens and false teachers, which renders them odious to God, and brings on their reprobation.

* Eccl. iii. 12. † Epp. vi. ‡ Colos. iii.

Q. In what does this duty consist ?

A. In exactly performing what parents command, and in avoiding what they forbid. So long as children are under their parents' authority, and in their family, they are obliged to obey their parents in all things, which are not against the law of God : this the Apostle, above cited, expressly declares ; "*in all things*," says he, and "*in the Lord*," which particularly regards all family concerns, which are entirely subject to the parents' management and authority. And as parents have the charge of their children's souls entrusted to them by Almighty God, and have authority over them for this purpose ; of course they have a right to command their children in what regards their behaviour, the company they keep, the books they read, the diversions they take, and the like. So whatever orders or prohibitions parents give with regard to these things, children are obliged in conscience to obey them.

2. In the manner of their obedience ; that it be cheerful, ready, and pleasant, without excuses or delay, without murmuring or stubbornness.

3. In receiving reproof and correction with

patience, humbly acknowledging their faults, and promising amendment: “He that loveth correction, loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is foolish.”*

Q. Are children obliged to obey their parents in what is contrary to the law of God?

A. It is manifest they are not: for the Apostle says they ought to obey *in all things* that are *according to God* as we have seen above.

Q. Do the Sacred Writings afford us any touching examples of obedience of children towards parents?

A. Yes, Isaac carried the wood destined for the sacrifice wherein he himself was to be the holocaust.† Jacob left his father’s house by order of Isaac, to seek a wife in a strange land among his relatives.‡ The daughter of Jephthe submitted without murmur or resistance to the accomplishment of his vow.§ Striking was the example of the obedience of the youthful Samuel to the high priest Heli.|| Tobias was uniform in his obedience to his pious parents; and to his father’s advice, he replies: “I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded

* Prov. xii. † Gen. xxii. ‡ Id. xxviii. § Judges xi.
|| 1 Kings, iii.

me.”* And the prophet Jeremias mentions the obedience of the Rechabites as an instance how very agreeable such obedience is before God, even when the things commanded by their parents are in themselves indifferent, and not most strictly obligatory. Hear the words of the prophet: “And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, Drink ye wine. And they answered, We will not drink wine; because Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us saying, You shall drink no wine, neither you, nor your children forever; neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any; but you shall dwell in tents all your days; that you may live many days on the earth, in which you are strangers. Therefore we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, in all things that he commanded us.†”

This obedience was so pleasing in the eyes of God, that the prophet concludes thus to that family: “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and have

* Tob. vi. † Jer. xxxv.

kept all his precepts, and have done all that he commanded you : therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel : There shall not be wanting a man of the race of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, standing before me forever."*

All these examples of the Just in the Old Law, have been consecrated by the example of the Son of God made Man. The Gospels, which have passed over in silence all the actions of His life during the thirty years at Nazareth, inform us only that "*He was subject to them,*" (Mary and Joseph,) and that "he grew in wisdom, age and grace with God and men."†

Q. Why did the Holy Ghost inspire the sacred writers to observe this silence ?

A. The Holy Ghost in suppressing the details of the thirty years of the life of Jesus Christ, and making known only his submission to the Blessed Virgin and to S. Joseph, his foster-father, intended thereby the better to make us understand the importance of filial piety.

OF THE ASSISTANCE DUE TO PARENTS BY CHILDREN.

Q. What assistance do children owe their parents ?

* Jer. xxxv. † Luc. ii.

A. A two-fold assistance, the one spiritual, the other corporal.

Q. In what does the spiritual assistance consist ?

A. In praying for them ; in procuring the sacraments for them, in case of serious sickness ; and especially in helping them in their dying moments ; and in praying for them after their death, and also procuring the prayers of others for them.

Q. If a parent were living in impiety, or in ignorance of the true faith, should filial piety induce children to pray for them more frequently, and with greater fervor ?

A. Yes ; as they could not give them a sincerer proof of their attachment than to supplicate the God of Mercies and the Father of Lights in their favor.

Q. Are children obliged also to assist parents in their corporal necessities ?

A. To neglect doing so, in their necessities, would be a most monstrous crime, and did not experience afford many examples of such an excess, one could scarcely believe that it could enter the breast of man. It is certainly a crime against justice, charity, and gratitude, for we

owe to our parents what we never can repay. Hence the Scripture says : " Of what evil fame is he that forsaketh his father."*

And again : " Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life ; and if his understanding fail, have patience with him ; and despise him not when thou art in thy strength : for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten."†

Q. Do the Scriptures afford any examples of great filial love to parents in time of distress ?

A. Yes, in the case of Joseph, who supported his aged father and all his brethren, during the five years of famine, which desolated the land of Chanaan. He thus addresses his father Jacob : " I will feed thee in the land of Gessen, (for there are yet five years of famine remaining,) lest both thou perish, and thy house, and all things thou hast."‡

This affection of Joseph for his brothers is the more admirable, as they had previously treated him with the most unnatural cruelty.§

* Eccl. iii. † Id. ‡ Gen. xlv. § Gen. xxxvii.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OF THE MOST SUITABLE MEANS OF MAINTAIN-
ING THE FEAR OF THE LORD IN
ONE'S FAMILY.

Q. What is the most suitable means of maintaining the fear of the Lord in one's family ?

A. It is to lay down a rule of life, which assigns to each member of the family his occupation during the day.

Q, Have you any model to propose for imitation ?

A. History presents us with many, but particularly that of Saint Elzear, descended of the ancient family of Sabran, in Provence, whose father was created Count of Ariano, in the Kingdom of Naples. His pious mother, called the *Good Countess*, immediately after his birth, presented him to God, begging that her child might die in his childhood, rather than ever offend the Divine Majesty by mortal sin. It

would appear that the mother's prayer was granted, as history informs us that he never lost his baptismal innocence. At an early age, he was affianced to Delphina, daughter to the lord of Pui-Michel, not less remarkable for her exalted rank, than for her elevated piety. In this happy and saintly couple was seen revived the example of the saints of the primitive ages. Elzear was only twenty-three years old when by his parents' death, he inherited his father's honors and estates; but these advantages he looked upon merely as talents and instruments put into his hands by Divine Providence, to be employed for the advancement of piety, the support of justice, and the relief and protection of the poor. By fervent and assiduous prayer he fortified his soul against all inordinate love of creatures; he understood the vanity of those things which flatter the senses, and had sovereign contempt for all that might serve to feed self-love. Eternal goods were the only object of his desires. He recited every day the Office of the Church, with many other devotions. He communicated almost every day, striving to do it every time with greater devotion. He said one day to his wife, S. Delphina: "I do not

think a man on earth can enjoy any pleasure equal to that which I feel in the Holy Communion. It is the greatest comfort and delight of a soul in her earthly pilgrimage, to receive most frequently this Divine Sacrament." His devotion was not morose, because it was true and perfect ; it rendered him always pleasant, mild, and agreeable to every one in conversation. It is a dangerous mistake to imagine that one can be devout merely by spending much time in prayer, and that devout persons can fall into a slothful and careless neglect of their temporal concerns. On the contrary, only solid virtue is able to do business, and to dispatch it well. It taught Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be careful housekeepers, and excellent masters of families ; it taught Moses to be a great legislator and commander, Josue to be a brave general, David to be a wise king, and the Machabees to be invincible soldiers. In like manner S. Elzear was rendered by his piety itself most faithful, prudent and dexterous in the management of temporal affairs, both domestic and public ; valiant in war, active and prudent in peace, faithful in every duty and trust, and diligent in the care of his household.

When he first began to keep house at Pui-Michel, he made the following regulations for his family, which he took care to see always observed.

RULES OF LIFE, BY S. ELZEAR, FOR ALL THE INDIVIDUALS OF HIS FAMILY.*

1. "Every one in his family shall daily hear Mass, whatever business they may have. If God be well served in my house, nothing will be wanting.

2. Let no one swear, curse or blaspheme, under pain of being severely chastised, and afterwards shamefully dismissed. Can I hope that God will pour forth his heavenly blessings on my house, if it is filled with those who devote themselves to the devil? Or can I endure those who infect houses and poison the souls of others?

3. Let all persons honor chastity, and let no one imagine that the least impurity in word or action shall ever go unpunished in Elzear's house. It is never to be hoped for of me.

4. Let all men and women confess their sins every week, and let no one be so unhappy as

* See Butler's Lives, 27 Sept.

not to communicate at least on all the principal festivals ; namely, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the feasts of Our Lady.

5. Let no one be idle in my house. In the morning, the first thing shall be, that every one raise his heart to God, with fervent prayer and oblation of himself, and of all his actions ; then let them all go to their business, the men abroad, the women at home. In the morning a little more time shall be allowed for meditation ; but away with those who are perpetually in the church to avoid the business of their employments. This they do, not because they love contemplation, but because they desire to have their work done for them. The life of the pious woman, as described by the Holy Ghost, is not only to pray well, but also to be modest and obedient, to do her work diligently, and to take good care of the household. The ladies shall pray and read in the mornings, and shall spend the afternoons at some work.

6. I will have no playing at dice, or any games of hazard. There are a thousand innocent diversions, though time passes soon enough without being idly thrown away. Yet I desire not my castle to be a cloister, nor my peo-

ple hermits. Let them be merry, and sometimes divert themselves ; but never at the expense of conscience, or with danger of offending God.

7. Let peace be perpetually maintained in my family. Where peace reigns, there God dwells. Where envy, jealousy, suspicions, reports and slanders are harbored in a family, two armies are formed, which are continually upon the watch, and lie in ambush to surprise one another, and the master is besieged, wounded and devoured by them both. Whoever will serve God well, he shall be dear to me ; but I will never endure him who declares himself an enemy of God. Slanderers, detractors, and disorderly servants tear one another to pieces. All such as do not fear God, cannot be trusted by their master ; they will easily plunder him. Amidst such, he is as a man beset on every side by enemies.

8. If any difference or quarrel happen, I will have the precept of the Apostle inviolably observed, that the sun set not before it be appeased ; as soon as it occurs, let it be quashed, and all manner of bitterness laid in the tomb of forgetfulness. I know the impossibility of

living among men and not having something to suffer. Scarce is a man in harmony with himself one whole day ; and if a melancholy humor comes on him, he knows not well what he himself would have. Not to be willing to bear or pardon others, is diabolical ; but to love enemies, and to render good for evil, is the touchstone of the sons of God. To such servants my house, my purse and heart shall be always open ; I am willing to regard them as my masters.

9. Every evening all my family shall assemble to a pious conference, in which they shall hear something spoken of God, the salvation of souls, and the gaining of Paradise. What a shame is it, that though we are in this world only to gain heaven, we seldom seriously think of it ; and scarce ever speak of it but at random ! O life, how is it employed ! O labors, how ill are they bestowed ! For what follies do we sweat and toil ! Discourses on heaven invite us to virtue, and inspire us with a disrelish for the dangerous pleasures of the world. By what means shall we learn to love God, if we never speak of him ? Let none be absent from this conference under pretence of attending to

my affairs. I have no business which so nearly toucheth my heart as the salvation of those that serve me. They have given themselves to me, and I resign all to God, master, servants, and all that is under my control.

10. I most strictly command that no officer or servant under my jurisdiction or authority, injure any man in goods, honor, or reputation, or oppress any poor person, or ruin any one under color of attending to my interests. I will not have my coffers filled by emptying those of others, or by squeezing the blood out of the veins, and the marrow out of the bones of the poor. Such blood-sucking, wicked servants, to enrich their masters, damn both masters and themselves. Do you imagine that a master who giveth five shillings in alms, wipeth away the sin of his servants, who have torn out the entrails of the poor, whose cries for vengeance mount up to heaven? I had rather go naked to Paradise, than, being clothed with gold and scarlet, be dragged with the impious rich man into hell. We shall be wealthy enough if we fear God. Any property acquired by injustice or oppression, will be like a fire hidden under the earth, which will rend,

waste and throw down or consume the whole. Let fourfold be restored if I be found to have anything which is another's ; and let my dealings be public, that all who have been aggrieved on my account, may find redress. Shall a man whose treasures are in heaven, be so fond of earthly dirt ? I came naked out of the womb of my mother, and shall quickly return naked to the womb of our common mother, the earth. Shall I, for a moment of life between these two tombs, hazard the salvation of my soul for eternity ? If so, faith, virtue and reason would be wholly eclipsed, and all understanding blasted."

S. Elzear was the first and the most exact in the observance of these salutary rules. He was particularly careful that if any one uttered the least injurious or angry word against another, he should ask pardon, and make satisfaction, this humiliation being the most effectual remedy for passion, which always takes its rise from pride. Thus charity reigned in the saint's house.

His holy wife, Saint Delphina, concurred with him in all his views, and was most perfectly obedient to him. She was sensible that

the devotions of a married woman ought to be ordered in a different manner from those of a religious person. Her time was so regulated, that she had certain hours allotted for spiritual exercises, and others for her household affairs and other duties. Nothing was more admirable than her attention to all her domestics, and her prudent care that peace should be preserved, the fear of God and all virtues cherished, and especially all brawling, tale-bearing, and other plagues of families banished. She loved her servants as children, and was honored by them as a mother, and as a saint. In the example of this happy couple it appeared how truly it is said, that good and virtuous masters make good servants, and that the families of saints are God's families. It seemed that all who came under the roof of Elzear contracted a spirit of sincere piety ; so great is the influence of good example set by masters and mistresses.

The gate through which the rich must enter heaven, is charity to the poor. S. Elzear often visited the hospitals, especially those of lepers, whose loathsome sores he frequently kissed, cleansed and dressed with his own hands.

He every day washed the feet of twelve poor men, and often served them himself. He was the common father of all who were in distress, and provided large granaries of corn, and store-houses of all other provisions for their relief. Being one day asked, why he so tenderly loved the poor, he answered with great feeling: Because the bosom of the poor is the treasury of Jesus Christ. He used to say: "How can we ask God to bestow on us His Kingdom, if we deny Him a cup of water? How can we pray for His grace, if we deny Him what is His own? Does not He too much honor us in vouchsafing to receive anything from us?" In a time of scarcity, his charities seemed to surpass all bounds. The people of the country of Ariano, in the Kingdom of Naples, revolted against him, and refused to acknowledge his sovereignty. Elzear opposed to them for three years no other arms than those of meekness and patience, which his friends reproachfully called indolence and cowardice. His cousin, the Prince of Tarento, said to him on this occasion: "Allow me to manage these rebels for you. I will hang up some, and make the rest as pliant as a glove. It is fit among the good

to be a lamb, but with the wicked to play the lion. Take your ease ; say your prayers for me, and I will give so many blows for you, that this rabble shall give you no more trouble." Elzear, smiling, replied : " What, would you have me begin my government with massacres and bloodshed ? I will gain these men by kind offices. It is no great matter for a lion to tear lambs ; but for a lamb to tear a lion in pieces is admirable. Now, by God's assistance, you will shortly see this miracle." The effect verified the prediction of the saint. The citizens of Ariano of their own accord became ashamed of their rebellion, and with the greatest submission and respect, invited the saint to take possession of his territory, and ever after loved him as their father. Elzear discovered to them the true motive why he bore so patiently these and such like insults and injuries, saying : " If I receive any affront, or feel any motion of impatience rising in my breast, I turn all my thoughts towards Jesus Christ crucified, and say to myself : can what I suffer bear any comparison with what Jesus Christ was pleased to undergo for me ?" Thus to triumph over injuries was not want of courage, but the most

heroic greatness of soul, and true Christian generosity.

That he was not deficient in courage and skill in battle, was evinced in the war which the Emperor Henry VII. carried on against the King of Naples. Elzear was sent by the King of Naples to head his army, and in two pitched battles, the emperor was defeated, chiefly by the valor and generalship of our saint.

S. Elzear was seized with his last sickness in Paris, in the year 1323. He had made his Will some years previously, leaving legacies to his servants, to hospitals and to other objects of charity. In this sickness he made a general confession with great compunction and many tears, and he continued to make his confession every day of his illness, though he is said never to have offended God by any mortal sin. The history of Christ's Passion, which mystery had always been the favorite object of his devotion, was every day read to him, and in it he found great comfort amidst his pains. In receiving the Holy Viaticum, he said with great joy: "This is my hope, thus I desire to die." After he had received Extreme Unction, and had suffered a painful agony, he happily expired on

the 27th of September, in the year 1323, the twenty-eighth of his age. Judicial informations were taken of his miracles by order of Pope Clement VI. Urban V. signed the decree of his canonization, but it was only published by Gregory XI. in 1369.

S. Delphina, whose life in the world was that of a fervent religious, renounced its honors on the death of her saintly husband, and assumed the habit of the Poor Clares in a nunnery which she had founded at Naples. She died at Apt, in 1369, on which day she is named in the Martyrology of the Franciscan Order.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OTHER SUITABLE MEANS OF INSPIRING AND
MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN
PIETY IN A FAMILY.

Q. What special means ought parents and the heads of families to employ, in order to keep a spirit of Christian piety in their families.

A. If the rule of life given in the preceding chapter be followed, there is no doubt but that great and signal blessings will be imparted to the families adopting them; and little more can be added for their spiritual welfare. There are however certain matters that may be added, and certain precautions that may be suggested.

1. It would be most advisable for the heads of families to be provided with a good collection of religious books, and I would particularly recommend all families to be provided with a copy of Gobinet's Instructions to Youth.

2. The heads of families should be careful

to destroy all books containing anything against the principles of Catholic doctrine ; also novels and immoral pamphlets, with which productions the country is flooded. The evil arising from these pernicious works is so lamentable and so extensive, that even editors of political journals have written very strongly against them.

3. Parents and the heads of families should remove from their houses all immoral pictures, and replace them by those which represent the great mysteries of the life, Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, as also those of his most blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, and of those saints whose names their children may bear.

Q. Is it laudable and advantageous to have the crucifix in the family ?

A. Most certainly ; for the respect shown to it, will one day procure the fulfillment of the consoling promise made by Christ : " every one that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in Heaven."* But it is much to be regretted that Catholics concede on this point much of their

* Matt. x. 82.

convictions to Protestant prejudices. The cross should be the standard round which all the family should rally, to offer up their devotions to God. In the hand of a pious parent, the Cross would suffice to show forth in the most touching manner, the enormity of sin, its deplorable consequences, the necessity of expiating it by penance. It also most strongly proves the immense love of God towards man, and His infinite mercy to sinners. Hence the Church, guided by the Spirit of Christ, raises it in triumph on our churches, places it on our altars, and in our cemeteries, in fine, exposes it in all our processions, and has it as a most prominent ornament on every part of the sacerdotal vestments. Why then should Christians be ashamed of this sign, which is by excellence styled the *Sign of the Son of Man*?

Q. Should parents, who are desirous of securing the salvation of their children, have night prayers and spiritual reading in their families?

A. I know of no practice more important to suggest to them, both for their own salvation and that of their children. Where this holy custom exists the promises of Christ assuredly

are realized : "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."* Hence Christians were always persuaded, from these words of Christ, that the greater the number of persons assembled together to implore the graces of Heaven, the more efficacious are such prayers. Hence also the eloquent and holy doctor S. Chrysostom, and other great saints, so strongly and frequently urge this point in their instructions to the people ; "Where prayer and psalms and holy canticles are heard, it may truly be said that God is there honored as in His Church."†

* Matt. xviii. † S. Chrysost. tom. v. p. 188.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OF THE INCONVENIENCES INSEPARABLE FROM
MIXED MARRIAGES.

Hitherto we have endeavored to lay down such principles as are calculated to make the Christian feel a just idea of the dignity and sanctity of marriage, and to urge those about to enter on that state, to prepare themselves for it with all possible care, as they value the temporal and eternal welfare of themselves and of their offspring. We are now necessarily required to add some reflections concerning mixed and civil marriages, as the state of our country facilitates such unions, which prove very frequently most detrimental to faith and piety.

Q. Is the difference of religion a sufficient motive for breaking a match, which would appear suitable on all other grounds ?

A. The following reasons will show that it is sufficient. In the first place the Church,

guided by the Spirit of God in matters of faith and discipline, has never ceased to prohibit such unions, except in cases of legitimate dispensation, founded on reasons of which she should be the uncontrolled judge. But for the most part these dispensations are reluctantly given, and are applied for only as a mere matter of form, when the marriage is on the eve of being celebrated.

Q. What are the objections usually made to mixed marriages ?

A. They are great and numerous. I shall here indicate five principally.

1. Mixed marriages endanger the faith of the Catholic party, and of the children.

2. They lead to indifference in matters of religion.

3. They are incompatible with social union.

4. They are irreconcilable with the love which ought to unite the hearts of the spouses.

5. If the Catholic party be attached to his faith, he must experience a continual uneasiness of mind respecting the salvation of his partner.

Q. How do mixed marriages endanger the faith of the Catholic ?

A. This occurs in various ways. 1. The Catholic party meets with no support in the sentiments and the examples of his partner to sustain and strengthen him in his faith, and in practices of Christian piety. 2. He is exposed to derision and unpleasant treatment, which may lead to unhappy consequences, whenever there is question of fulfilling any of the duties of religion. If, for example, the person has to prepare for confession, to go to church, or if a day of fast or abstinence occur, or a festival day, there is an apprehension of drawing on oneself the ridicule of the other party. It is difficult, says Tertullian,* to suppose that an unbelieving husband will be so reasonable and indulgent as to look with indifference on your pious practices; and when you know they displease him, you will be put to the necessity either of concealing them from him, or you will find yourself in a state of continual alarm. 3. If the Catholic party be the wife, she will scarcely be able to resist the many snares laid to draw her away from her religion. The force of example of a beloved husband, natural condescension of character, the love of peace,

* Lib. 11, ad uxorem, c. 5.

will quickly destroy, or at least weaken her faith, and make her tepid in the discharge of her religious duties.

Q. Are marriages with Protestants as dangerous to faith as those with Jews and unbelievers ?

A. Though marriages with the unbaptized are more immediately contrary to the essence of the Christian religion, and hence such marriages are null and void, unless a dispensation be granted, nevertheless in certain respects they are probably less dangerous to faith, for the following reasons. In union with a downright unbeliever, a Christian soul would hold in utter horror any system which would totally reject Christ, and hence would be less disposed to seduction from the sophisms of the infidel ; but in the union of a Catholic with a Protestant, the latter might more easily shake off the faith of the weak and uninformed Catholic. He might say that he was a Christian, that he adored the same God, that he admitted the same Saviour, their religions were in a manner sisters, that they differed only in secondary points, and that the justice and mercy of God would not make the eternal destiny of men

depend on the practice or omission of mere ceremonies.

Q. How do mixed marriages endanger the faith of children ?

A. In very many ways : 1. It is difficult to suppose that they can grow up without very serious doubts, which doubts would be incompatible with the *absolute* conviction of the truth of their faith. The equality of affection which they have for both parents, preventing them from supposing that either can be in error, must tempt them to look on the diversity of religion of their parents, as a mere matter of opinion. How then can it be expected that their faith will continue firm and entire ? 2. If the protestant party manifest his religious principles in the presence of the children, if in a moment of discontent and spite, he turn into ridicule the dogmas, the practices, the ceremonial of the Catholic Church ; in a word, if he exercise an open or secret influence of proselytism, can it be possible but that the tender minds of children must hesitate in their belief ?

3. How much will the danger be augmented, if to the parental influence, there be added

that of relatives, friends, and neighbors; and above all, if these insinuations be strengthened by either the promises or menaces of one, whose favor it is their interest to secure?

4. If the catholic parent die before the children arrive at maturity, before they are solidly instructed in catholic principles, before they have acquired a taste for piety, and the inestimable habits of a Christian life, will they not then be exposed to manifest perversion? This apprehension is still more alarming in a country where the influence is manifestly Protestant, for when the catholic parent dies, the consciences of children are acted on not only by the surviving parent who is Protestant, but also by considerations of fortune and ambition, and by the influence of persons in power, which though secret, is not the less efficacious.

Q. How do mixed marriages endanger the filial affection of the children towards their parents?

A. When the children see their parents divided, not on points of minor importance, but on matters of the greatest moment, on the means of gaining eternal happiness, they must experience a certain coldness and distrust, a diminu-

tion of respect and affection towards that parent who is a stranger to their religion. Or if their affection be equally warm towards both parents, they will be necessarily led to suppose that the differences of opinion between their parents in matters of religion, are mere indifferent shades of opinion, and that one can arrive at heaven by roads, not only different, but even actually opposed.

Q. How do these marriages interrupt domestic peace. .

A. It may be answered with the learned Doctor S. Ambrose :

“How can there be a sincere union of the affections, when persons are divided on religion ?”* If the mind and heart be divided as to the means of attaining their eternal destiny, can they harmonize in their daily intercourse with each other ? Either you must suppose a virtue truly angelical on both sides, or a most entire and deplorable indifference for everything that relates to religion, in order to prevent, between the spouses, frequent contention and misunderstanding. In such a position, a kind and condescending charity on the part of the

* Lib. 11, de Abrahamo.

Catholic, would become a stumbling block for his faith, as S. Chrysostom has remarked.*

Q. Why should mixed marriages cause continual disquietude and affliction to the catholic party, if he be attached to his religion ?

A. Because in such marriages, the affections of the heart cannot but be troubled at every instant, by reflections on the eternal destinies of the Protestant partner, with whom he lives in such intimate and frequent intercourse.

The testimonies of love and tenderness must always be accompanied with cruel sadness, because conscience reminds him that there is but "*one faith,*" as *there is but one Lord*;† and that "*without faith, it is impossible to please God*;"‡ that his companion is of the number of those whom Christ commands us to look upon as heathens and publicans, because they do not hear the Church ; that the loved partner does not belong *to the one fold* and *to the one shepherd* § mentioned by Christ ; neither does that companion form a part of the spiritual edifice of which Christ is the chief corner stone, and of which He constituted Peter the

* In Ep. ad Philip. Hom. 2. † Eph. iv.

‡ Hebr. xi.

§ Jo. x.

foundation: "on this rock I will build My Church;" neither is the same partner within the holy Ark destined to preserve the just from the waters of the deluge. In the midst of these cruel anxieties, the orthodox party has only to bow down and adore the inscrutable judgments of God, and by fervent prayer to implore the mercy and blessing of Heaven on the object of his sighs and tears.

Q. Does Scripture present any prohibition against mixed marriages?

A. Yes, and of the most positive nature; because what is there said about avoiding heretics, is more expressly applicable to the danger arising from a union so intimate as that of marriage.

Q. Cite for me some of those passages of Scripture.

A. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican."*

"A man that is a heretic," says S. Paul, "after the first and second admonition, avoid."†

"Whosoever continueth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If any man come to you,

* Math. xviii. † Tit. iii.

and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him, God speed you.”*

“Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and to avoid them.”†

Q. What consequences do you draw from these texts against mixed marriages?

A. I draw as a necessary consequence from these texts, their condemnation. In effect, can we suppose that God would authorize the faithful to contract a union so intimate and so close as that of marriage, with those whom He declares we should *avoid* as *heathens*, whom we should *fly* so as *not even to receive them into the house*, when such intimacy is attended with danger? And we have seen above, that danger does exist: a sad experience proves the same.

Q. Have the Councils of the Church condemned these marriages?

A. Many Councils have condemned them, and have even submitted to canonical punishments those Catholics who contract them, as also the parents who encourage the same.

* 2. Ep. † Rom. xvi.

These Councils have applied to such marriages the words of S. Paul :

“Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. What fellowship hath light with darkness ? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever.”* The words of Exodus and Deuteronomy, where the Almighty forbade the Jews to marry with the people of the land of Chanaan, have also been applied by several Councils to these marriages. Among these Councils I might cite those of Elvira in Spain, Laodicea in Phrygia, Carthage in Africa, Chalcedon in Bythinia, Tours in France.

Q. What are the decisions of the Holy See respecting these mixed marriages ?

A. Pope Benedict XIV. has in many of his learned works discussed the question of mixed marriages. I shall give the words of this most illustrious pontiff, in order that the doctrine of the Church may be thoroughly understood on a point which involves the salvation of so many persons.

In his work entitled, *De Synodo Diocesana*, he shows that the Church ever was most opposed to such marriages, and “that she con-

* 2 Cor. vi.

demned them as illicit or sinful in nearly the same terms as she condemned the marriages of Catholics with Pagans or Jews,"* if the precautions required by her were not duly observed in cases of her granting dispensations. He then cites the declaration of the Universal Council of Chalcedon,† held in the year 451, together with that of two Provincial Councils, namely of Laodicea‡ an. 350, and of Agde§. I give the words of these Councils for the satisfaction of my readers, as also the very words of the learned Pontiff. "In those provinces, therefore, in which, in disregard of the ecclesiastical canons, such marriages are frequently celebrated, the Bishop ought, especially in his Synod, to deter Catholics from contracting them to the loss of their own souls, as we have already ordered.¶

* "Illicitum et sacrilegum esse nemo dubitat: quare Ecclesia iisdem fere legibus, quibus Christianis interdixit, ne connubia inirent cum infidelibus, Catholicos pariter a sacrilegis nuptiis cum hæreticis contrahendis, deterruit." Lib. vi. c. 5, n. 3.

† Catholicis interdicat S. S. Conc. Chalced: "Hæretico, vel Pagano, vel Judæo se conjungere, nisi forte promittat se ad orthodoxam fidem persona orthodoxæ copulanda transferre."

‡ Ibid. § Ibid.

¶ Constitutione xxxiv. Bullar. Tom. i.

The principal duty of the bishop shall be to announce to Catholics the extreme danger of them, both as regards themselves and their children; which therefore cannot be defended on the pretext of the prevailing custom (more properly called corruption), unless the dangers be removed, which, nevertheless, can scarcely be done, as is very justly remarked by the learned laymen, Pirhing, Reiffenstuel, Van Espen and others."

"We have said, that the dangers, which almost always accompany the marriages of Catholics with Protestants, can scarcely be removed; nevertheless we do not pronounce it to be impossible. For there may be certain circumstances in which the person, who has the faculty, having maturely considered all the circumstances, as regards the faith of the Catholic party, and the Catholic education of the children, may decide on granting a dispensation, in virtue of which the marriage is rendered lawful."*

* "*Is igitur in Provinciis, in quibus ejusmodi conjugia, non sine sacrorum canonum contemptu, passim celebrantur, debet Episcopus, in sua præsertim Synodo, ab illis in propriarum animarum perniciem contrahendis Catholicos absterre: quod nos faciendum ediximus in nostra Constitutione 84, nostri Bullarii, Tom. 1. Præcipue quoque*

Q. On what conditions does the Holy See grant dispensations to contract mixed marriages, and are these conditions binding under mortal sin?

A. The two principal conditions already mentioned, namely, that of preserving the Catholic party from the danger of perversion, and secondly, that of educating in the Catholic faith all the children resulting from such marriage, oblige in conscience, under mortal sin, so that no reasonable man can doubt of the justice and prudence of the Catholic discipline. The learned Pontiff, Benedict XIV., thus speaks of the precautions to be taken in the case of mixed

Episcopalis muneris partes erunt, maxima Catholicis denunciare pericula, quæ tam ipsis, quam nascituræ soboli, ex præfatis imminent nuptiis; quæ propterea cohonestari nequeunt obtentu solius consuetudinis (verius corruptelam dicerent,) nisi ea amoveantur pericula, quod tamen vix evenire posse, recte notant Layman, Perhing, Reiffenstuel, Van Espen et alii passim."

"Diximus, autem vix evenire posse, ut a connubiis Catholicorum cu mhæreticis ea amoveantur pericula, quæ ipsis plerumque conjuncta esse solent; verum non id omnino impossibile esse pronuntiavimus. Tales enim reipsa concurrere possunt circumstantiæ; quæ cum ab eo, qui facultatem dispensandi habet, expensæ fuerint, aditum aperiunt concessioni legitimæ dispensationis, cujus vi matrimonium inter partes, hæreticam unam, alteramque Catholicam, licitum reddatur. De Synodo Dioces. lib. vi. c. 5."

marriages: "Weighing the nature of this matter (mixed marriages with Protestants), we hesitate not to affirm, that if the danger of perversion on the part of the Catholic party be removed, which undoubtedly must be removed, and every special case must be provided for by suitable conditions, if also diligent care be taken, that the children, whether male or female, shall all be educated in the true faith, and if the Catholic party seek the conversion of the Protestant by prayer, good example, and other prudent means; and if in addition, there be grave and manifest motives for granting the dispensation, the dispensation being granted under these conditions, no principle of the Divine or Natural Law is violated, there being nothing more than a derogation from the Ecclesiastical Law. And as this has been applied by the proper authority, the marriage contracted, in virtue of such dispensation, is perfectly lawful and right, as Sylvius observes."*

Q. Has Pius VII. expressed the sentiments of the Holy See on the matter of mixed marriages?

A. Yes; in the year 1809, when the bishops

* Benedict XIV. De Synodo Dioces. lib. ix. c. 8, n. 5.

of France applied to Rome for power to dispense in the laws of the Church regarding mixed marriages, the venerable Pontiff declares, "that the Church of Jesus Christ ever reprobated and condemned the matrimonial union between Catholics and persons professing error ; because, beside the evident danger of perversion for the Catholic party, or for the children which might be born from their union, it would also be extremely difficult for them to live together in perfect harmony. Hence the Holy See has never ceased up to this day to exhort the faithful to abstain from such marriages, as being extremely pernicious to the salvation of souls, and as most dangerous to faith. For which reason we cannot depart from the constant rule of the Holy See, from the examples and conduct of our predecessors, if you urge us to give an answer to your demands.

"As some of you, Venerable Brethren, represent several reasons for permission to dispense in the ecclesiastical law on this subject, we have remitted the whole matter to the mature and careful examination of Cardinals and Theologians of the Holy Roman Church, and shall communicate to you without delay what

We have judged in the Lord most useful under existing circumstances.”

Q. What are the declarations of the late Pontiff, Gregory XVI. on this subject?

A. He has renewed the decree of his predecessors, and vigorously maintained the wise discipline of the Church respecting them. He thus addresses the Archbishop and Bishops of the Kingdom of Bavaria, an. 1832.

“Venerable Brethren, health and apostolic benediction. The Apostolic See has at all times watched with greatest care over the exact observance of the canons of the Church, which strictly prohibit the marriage of Catholics with those who profess error. Although it has been necessary to tolerate them in some places in order to avoid a greater scandal, nevertheless the Roman Pontiffs have never omitted to employ every means in their power, in order to make the faithful understand the deformity and danger arising from such union, and the great crime the Catholic man or woman are guilty of, who presume to violate the laws of the Church on this matter. If they have sometimes consented to dispense in the holy and canonical prohibitions, it never was without

great reluctance, and pressing motives; but in granting the favor, they have exacted, as a condition, previous to the marriage, that not only the Catholic party be not exposed to the danger of perversion, and that he promise to do all that is possible to procure the conversion of the other party to the Catholic faith, but also that all the children of both sexes be educated in the holy Catholic religion. We have been most deeply afflicted to learn, from exact and numerous reports, that in your dioceses and in several other places, there are persons found who endeavor by every means in their power, to propagate, among the people confided to your charge, an entire liberty of conscience in contracting mixed marriages, and advance, in order to authorize the same, opinions contrary to Catholic truth.

“We hasten, then, Venerable Brethren, to fulfill towards you a duty of our Apostolic ministry, and to strengthen you, by this present letter, in order that you persist in teaching on this subject the unchangeable principles of the Catholic faith; that you watch with more solicitude than ever over the observance of the holy Canons, and having learned our decision

on this affair, you conform more perfectly to the Holy See. You should, then, make known to the faithful, who propose to contract such marriages, as also to their parents and guardians, the dispositions of the Sacred Canons in this regard, and strongly exhort them not to violate them to the injury of their souls. If it be necessary, you should remind them of the principle so generally admitted, of the Natural and Divine Law, which obliges us all, not only to avoid sin, but even the proximate danger of falling into it, as also that other precept, which commands parents 'to bring up their children in the discipline and correction of the Lord,' and consequently to teach them the true worship of God, which is alone found in the Holy Catholic Church. Hence you will exhort them to consider seriously how outrageous it would be to the Divine Majesty, and how cruel it would be to themselves and to their children, if in rashly contracting such marriages, they were to expose themselves to lose the faith, or to cause their children to lose it.

"In fine, should it happen, which may God forbid, that any Catholic, heedless of your instructions and exhortations, should persist in his

design of contracting a mixed marriage, without obtaining the canonical dispensation, and without fulfilling the prescribed conditions, then the parish priest shall consider it as his duty, not only not to honor the contracting parties with his presence, but also not to publish the bans, and not to give them any letters."

Q. What conditions does the Church impose when she grants a dispensation for a mixed marriage?

A. When there is a weighty motive for the dispensation, in granting it she lays down three conditions :

1. That the Catholic party shall enjoy a perfect liberty to exercise his religion.

2. That all the children be educated in the Catholic faith.

3. That the Catholic shall endeavour to procure the conversion of the Protestant partner by prayer, good example, and such other means of persuasion as Christian piety shall suggest.

Q. Should the Catholic live in peace and harmony with the Protestant partner?

A. Most assuredly, but without surrendering his liberty of conscience, which he possesses by the Divine and Natural Law, and without ne-

glecting the religious education of his children. In their domestic relations, more than on any other occasion, the duty of the Catholic is, according to the Apostle, to show forth *the good odor of Christ*,* and by the practice of every virtue, as the same Apostle teaches; "that the unfaithful husband be sanctified by the faithful wife, and the unfaithful wife be sanctified by the faithful husband."†

Q. Has the Catholic party more right to insist that the children be brought up in his religion, than the Protestant to expect that they be instructed in his religion?

A. Yes; for this simple reason, that the Protestant sects admit that persons can be saved in the profession of the Catholic religion, whereas the Catholic party believes that no one can be saved without the true faith, which alone can be found in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church.

* 2 Cor. xi. 15. † 1 Cor. vii.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OF THOSE MARRIAGES WHICH ARE CALLED
CIVIL MARRIAGES.

Q. Does the mere appearance before the civil magistrate suffice for the validity of marriage ?

A. Where the decree of the Council of Trent, which requires the presence of the parish priest and of two or three witnesses at the contract, has been published, such marriages are null.

Q. Has not the civil legislation degraded the matrimonial state, in depriving it of its sacred character, and in reducing it to the formalities of a simple contract ?

A. Yes : it is one of the deepest wounds inflicted on public morals. The pretended philosophy of our age looks on marriage as nothing else but an instinct of nature, which attracts the two sexes ; a domestic contract, founded on the inclination of the parties, and

on the aptitude and interests of families ; it recognizes in it a mere social transaction, whereof the civil law sanctions and secures the performance.

In the eye of religion, marriage is a divine institution, established and sanctioned by the Creator, Who, as Legislator and Pontiff, presided over the union of the first parents of the human race : "And the Lord God said, it is not good for man to be alone, let Us make him a help like unto himself. . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they shall be two in one flesh."*

Q. What is the object of the civil law in uniting the spouses ?

A. Under the government of the civil law, it is merely the natural inclinations, and worldly views of parents that call the youthful pair to marriage, in order to perpetuate a name, and secure an heir in a family. Society only thinks of seeing the propagation of the human species continued ; in a word, all the thoughts, and desires, all the hopes and fears of the children of the world are limited to the narrow compass of

* Gen. ii.

this present life. Religion says to her children, let us raise our hearts to God : she admonishes them that the principal view of the conjugal union is to increase the number of the adorers of the true God, and to augment the number of the faithful who believe in Jesus Christ ; she reminds them of the words of Tobias : “and now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which Thy name may be blessed forever and ever.”*

Q. Does not the religious celebration of marriage impart a more noble and more respectable idea to it, than the mere intervention of the civil magistrate ?

A. To be convinced of it, suffice it to confront the Liturgy of the Church with the formula of the law.

In the Liturgy of the Church all is elevated, pure, and holy ; it unfolds to the faithful the divine institution of marriage ; it places before them its true and principal destination according to the views of faith ; it shows them its sacred character as a sacrament ; it instructs them as to the dispositions for receiving it ; the rules to be followed in the choice of a spouse are laid

* Tob. viii. 9.

down, the reciprocal duties to be observed towards one another are pointed out ; in fine, the weighty obligations of father and mother towards their children are impressed on their minds.

The civil law requires the spouses to appear before the magistrate, in order to declare their wish to take one another for husband and wife. This formality being observed, the magistrate declares them to be united in marriage, according to the laws of the land ; he then draws up a legal certificate of their act, and thus an engagement between the parties is effected, on which their temporal and eternal destinies depend.

How great is not the difference between this contract drawn up and signed at a squire's office, and the solemn pledge of conjugal fidelity made to the Church of God ; and at the foot of the altar of the Most High ! ! Besides, it should be remembered, these civil marriages commenced in France in the midst of the disorders of the Revolution, which was no ways calculated to impress a character of dignity and respect on an institution, which certainly exercises a most powerful influence on the destinies of families and society at large.

Q. Does the civil law present any check to those passions, which so violently assail the spouses at the approach of marriage ?

A. No ; it leaves them without any guide, or preservative against the delusions which surround them, and the assaults of passion. But, religion, which watches over the destinies of its children with the tenderness of a mother, addresses the spouses with words of prudence and severity. She awakens in their hearts sentiments of faith and respect, for the sanctity of a sacrament which requires purity of soul, on the part of those who desire to receive the benediction of Heaven on their marriage.

Q. Does the civil law afford the spouses any support in the trials and tribulations of marriage ?

A. None ; they are left without consolation, to endure all their sorrows and woes in the bitterness of disappointment, and in the broils of domestic quarrels. Religion supports them by the grace of the sacraments, by the powerful resources of prayer, and by placing before them in their union the image of that union which exists between Jesus Christ and his Church. She encourages them to afford mutual help, which sweetens by patience all the vexations

caused by the roughness of temper, by the contradictions of character, by the variety of humors and desires, by the infirmity of nature, by the reverses of fortune, and by the weight of years.

Q. Does the civil law, by permitting divorce, inflict any great injury on the spouses, and especially on the children?

A. Most certainly, and it is admitted by writers of the first eminence, as we shall see. Modern philosophy, and before it, the pretended Reformation, by proclaiming divorce to their followers, opened a wide gate to the basest passions and the most grievous injustice. A celebrated writer in France, Count De Bonald, has thus remarked on this subject: "Cruel *permission*, which deprives the father of his authority, the mother of her dignity, the child of all protection; which reduces the family bond to a mere temporary lease, where the inconstancy of the human heart bargains according as passion or interest may prompt, and which varies as soon as other interests and other passions may appear."* A *permission* disquieting to the parents anxious to secure the happiness of their children, and calculated to excite inconstancy on the part of the

* Bonald on Divorce.

spouses ; a *permission* destructive of conjugal affection, of the happiness of the spouses, and of that of the children, inimical to the peace and credit of families, to good morals and to the reign of Christian virtue. "How much wiser is religion !" observes this illustrious writer ; "a conjugal union being once formed, she commands the party which is the stronger, to afford support, the weaker to show on all occasions mildness and patience ; and virtue is required of both. She interposes her influence to prevent discontent, to terminate dissensions.' But if, notwithstanding her exhortations, defects and vices change the perpetual bond of life into a daily torment, she relaxes it, but does not rend it asunder ; she separates them as to their cohabitation, but does not dissolve the society ; and allowing time to the embittered tempers to soften down, she disposes their hearts to be again united ; and this religion, which condemns every excess of passion, and pardons every frailty ; this religion, which commands the man, however guilty, to hope in the bounty of his Creator, does not allow the imprudent or volatile wife to despair of her husband's pardon. Philosophy erects the impenetrable wall of divorce between them ;

religion draws between them a temporary curtain of separation.”*

May Heaven bless this little work, undertaken with the sole view of reminding fathers and mothers, and Christian youth, of the dignity and sanctity of the conjugal union, on which depends the preservation of faith, of morals, of piety in the Church and of good order in society ! I shall now terminate it by addressing to parents and to children the important and touching words of the holy man Tobias : “ We are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God.”† I shall add those words of the Apostle, exhorting his beloved disciple : “ Meditate upon these things, be wholly in these things, that thy profiting may be manifest to all.”‡

* Bonald on Divorce. † Tobias viii. ‡ Tim. iv.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MASS FOR THE BRIDEGROOM AND BRIDE, AND
THE BENEDICTION OF THE MARRIAGE.

INTROIT. Tob. vii. May the God of Israel join you together: and may He be with you, who was merciful to our two first parents, when alone. And now, O Lord, make them praise thee with a full and sincere heart. Alleluia, Alleluia. Ps. cxxvii. Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, that walk in his ways. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Amen.

COLLECT.

Hear us, O Almighty and merciful God, that what we, according to our office, perform, may be abundantly sanctified by thy blessing, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

EPISTLE: EPHESIANS, CHAP. V.

Brethren: let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord. Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church: He is the Saviour of his body. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it: that he might sanctify it, cleansing by the laver of water in the word of life; that He might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament: But I speak in Christ and in the Church. Nevertheless let

every one of you in particular love his wife as himself, and let the wife fear her husband.

GRADUAL: PSALM cxxvii.

Thy wife shall be as a faithful vine on the sides of thy house: thy children as olive plants about thy table. Alleluia, Alleluia. Ps. xix. May the Lord send thee help from the sanctuary, and defend thee out of Sion. Alleluia.

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA, INSTEAD OF ALLELUIA, IS SAID

Tract. Ps. cxxvii. Behold thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. May the Lord bless thee out of Sion, and mayest thou see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. And mayest thou see thy children's children: peace upon Israel.

GOSPEL: MATTH. xix.

At that time the Pharisees came to Jesus, tempting Him and saying: is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Who answering said to them: have ye not read, that He who made man from the beginning, made them male and female? And He said: for this cause shall a man leave father

and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

OFFERTORY.

Ps. xxx. In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust : I have said : Thou art my God : my life is in thy hands.

SECRET.

Receive, we beseech thee, O Lord, the offerings we make for the sacred law of wedlock : and as thou art the author of this work, be also the regulator thereof, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE NUPTIAL BLESSING.

After the Paternoster, the priest, standing on the Epistle side, turns towards the bridegroom and bride kneeling before him, and says :

LET US PRAY.

Mercifully give ear, O Lord, to our prayers. and let Thy grace accompany this Thy institu-

tion, by which Thou hast ordained the propagation of mankind, that this bond which is formed by Thy authority, may be preserved by Thy grace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LET US PRAY.

O God, who by the power of Thy might, didst create all things out of nothing: who at the first forming of the world, having made man to the likeness of God, didst, out of his flesh, make the woman, and give her to him for a helpmate: and by this didst inform us, that what in the beginning was one, ought never to be separated: O God, who by so excellent a mystery, hast consecrated the union of the two sexes, and hast been pleased to make it a type of the great sacrament of Christ and his Church: O God, by whom woman is joined to man, and that union, which was instituted in the beginning, is still accompanied with a blessing, which alone, neither in punishment of original sin, nor by the sentence of the deluge, has been recalled, mercifully look down upon this Thy handmaid, who being now to be joined in wedlock, earnestly desires to be taken under Thy protection: may love and peace constantly

remain in her : may she marry in Christ faithful and chaste : may she ever imitate the holy women of former times : may she be pleasing to her husband, like Rachel : discreet like Rebecca : may she, in her years, and fidelity, be like Sarah : may the great author of all evil, at no time, have any share in her actions. May she remain attached to the faith and the commandments, and, being joined to one man in wedlock, may she shun all unlawful familiarities : may regularity of life and conduct be her strength against the weakness of her sex : may she be modest and grave, bashful and respectful, and well instructed in heavenly doctrine. May she be fruitful in offspring, approved and innocent : and may it at length be her happy lot to arrive at the rest of the blessed in the kingdom of God : and may they both see their children's children to the third and fourth generation, and live to a blessed old age, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION : PSALM cxxvii.

Thus shall every man be blessed that feareth the Lord : mayest thou see thy children's children : peace be to Israel.

POST COMMUNION.

Let us pray. Mercifully accompany, O Lord, we beseech Thee, what Thy Providence hath instituted ; and preserve in length of peace those, whom Thou lawfully joinest together, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BEFORE THE PRIEST GIVES THE BLESSING TO THE PEOPLE, HE TURNS TO THE BRIDEGROOM AND BRIDE, AND SAYS :

May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfill His blessing in you, that you may see your children's children to the third and fourth generation : and afterwards enter into the possession of everlasting life, through the assistance of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth forever and ever. Amen.

Then he exhorts them to observe an inviolable fidelity towards each other, to practice continence at the times of solemn fast and prayer (especially at the approach of the great solemnities), and to persevere in the fear of God.

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